



Matanuska-Susitna Borough
Coordinated Human Services
Transportation Plan Update

2023

Table of Contents

	Page
Executive Summary	ES-1
Chapter 1. Introduction & Background	1-1
Why a Coordinated Plan?	1-1
Key Terms	1-2
Who Does this Plan Serve?	1-3
Transit Modes Included in this Coordinated Plan	1-5
What Modes of Transportation are Included in Other Coordinated Plans?	1-6
How Does this Coordinated Plan Fit into the Federal, State, and Regional Context?	1-10
Plan Structure	1-11
Chapter 2. Existing Conditions	2-1
Demographics	2-1
Transportation Needs Assessment	2-33
Chapter 3. Review of Existing Plans, Studies, and Reports	3-1
Chapter 4. Stakeholder Engagement Summary	4-1
Stakeholder Interview Summary	4-1
Interview Talking Points Guide	4-7
Workshop	4-9
Chapter 5. Goals and Strategies	5-1
Vision and Mission Statements	5-1
Goals and Objectives	5-2
Strategies for the 2023 Coordinated Plan	5-4
Strategy Prioritization and Plan Implementation	5-13
Chapter 6. Plan Implementation and Funding Source	6-1
Potential Funding Sources for Strategy Implementation	6-4
Chapter 7. Looking Ahead/Conclusions	7-1
Annual Reporting on the Coordinated Plan: State of Coordination in the Mat-Su Borough	7-2
Lead Agencies for Implementation	7-2
Pending Updates from the U.S. Census Bureau	7-2
Transit Development Planning	7-3
Engagement Planning	7-4
Engagement Tactics and Toolkit	7-7
Appendix: Federal Funding Streams for Public Transportation	

Table of Figures

	Page
Figure 1-1 Mobility Challenges of Target Populations.....	1-3
Figure 2-1 Target Populations	2-1
Figure 2-2 Older Adult Residents.....	2-2
Figure 2-3 Distribution of Residents Aged 65 or Older	2-3
Figure 2-4 Youth Residents (Age 10 to 17).....	2-4
Figure 2-5 Distribution of Youth Residents (Age 10 to 17)	2-5
Figure 2-6 Individuals with a Disability.....	2-6
Figure 2-7 Population Density of Individuals with Disabilities	2-7
Figure 2-8 Individuals Living in Poverty	2-8
Figure 2-9 Population Density of Individuals Living in Poverty	2-9
Figure 2-10 American Indian / Alaska Native	2-10
Figure 2-11 Density of Indigenous Populations	2-11
Figure 2-12 Veteran Residents	2-12
Figure 2-13 Veteran Population Density	2-13
Figure 2-14 Limited English Speakers	2-14
Figure 2-15 Density of Individuals with Limited English Proficiency	2-15
Figure 2-16 Transit Propensity Index Map	2-17
Figure 2-17 Anchorage People Mover System Map	2-20
Figure 2-18 People Mover Travel Training.....	2-31
Figure 6-1 Proposed Implementation Timeline	6-2
Figure 6-2 Proposed Funding Streams	6-7

Executive Summary

The primary focus of the Matanuska-Susitna Borough's Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan Update is improving transportation options and access to services for the following target population groups:

	Older adults (aged 65 and older)		Individuals with Disabilities
	Youth (ages 10 to 17)		Individuals living in poverty
	Indigenous Populations		Individuals with limited English proficiency
	Veterans		

Historically, all of these population groups have higher rates of transit dependency and lower access to personal vehicles.

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT






As part of the MSB Coordinated Plan's stakeholder outreach and engagement process, the project team conducted a series of stakeholder interviews between the months of July and August of 2022. Stakeholders interviewed for this task included transit providers, human service organizations, and local, regional, and state agencies and organizations. The key takeaways were themed under the following topics:

- Coordination (*within the Mat-Su Valley and with other municipalities*)
- COVID-19 Pandemic Impacts
- Service Needs and Gaps Planning
- Priority Populations
- Funding
- Need for more Resources

These elements, coupled with the service inventory, were used to identify five themes to address needs and gaps in the Mat-Su Valley.

Five Themes

From our assessment of needs and gaps

	Coordination and Collaboration
	Access to Key Destinations
	Regional Transportation Needs
	Education and Awareness
	Funding

These themes will help to inform the goals, recommendations, and strategies, as well as the prioritization of projects and programs discussed in the project implementation plan.

KEY FINDINGS FROM PLAN REVIEW

Public transit does not adequately serve rural populations.

Low densities, large service areas, and extensive distances between activity centers complicate the delivery of public transit in rural areas of the Mat-Su Valley. Poor connectivity to regional hubs makes it difficult for residents to get their basic needs (e.g., medical care, education, shopping, and recreation) met. Opportunities exist to improve connections between rural and urban passenger travel via improved intermodal connections.

Funding remains a key barrier for transportation improvements.

There is limited dedicated funding in place to support the transit improvements needed to address the demands of a growing population experiencing demographic changes. Key funding sources are restrictive (both state and local funding sources); they can only be applied to services for specific populations and for specific purposes. As a result, under-capacity vehicles from different providers may travel the same route at the same time but are barred from picking up additional riders.

There is a desire to improve coordination of transportation services between transit and human service providers.

Due to limited availability of federal and state funding, it is in the best interest of transit and human service providers to coordinate transit programs and services to make the most efficient use of existing resources and to avoid duplicative efforts. The statewide long-range plan and policy references the desire to coordinate at broader scopes, stating that there is “higher demand for specialized transportation such as human service transportation, public transit, and other alternatives in various regions”. However, the next step is to encourage coordination at the regional level.

PLAN REVIEW

Several elements went into this Existing Conditions: State of the Region Report, including a demographic analysis, plan review, stakeholder interviews, a provider inventory, and a needs and gaps analysis.

Lack of support to implement transportation solutions.

Several plans have been developed over the years with solutions to regional needs and growth, but limited recommendations have been implemented. There are a variety of reasons as to why transportation options have yet to be implemented, but it appears that lack of cooperation and/or political will is “hamstringing” the process. Additionally, the Anchorage Metropolitan Statistical Area and Mat-Su Valley struggles with public trust issues in local government, meaning that even if a plan were to go out for vote, the support for implementation may not exist.

Mat-Su Borough has a higher rate of marginalized populations than other coordinated planning regions.

The individual target demographics this plan is designed for comprise up to 30% of the local population; however, when added together, the percent of the population in the Borough that is socially or politically marginalized is much greater (for example, youth and Veterans alone make up 46% of the total population, not to mention the others). With such large numbers in need, it truly underscores the urgency for more transportation services and further coordination amongst the providers.





Chapter 1.

Introduction & Background

This Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan Update—or “Coordinated Plan”—aims to make transportation more seamless for older adults, individuals with disabilities, and other people facing mobility challenges in the Matanuska-Susitna Borough (the Borough).

This chapter explains why this Coordinated Plan is important, who it serves, and ultimately sets the stage for subsequent chapters. It contains the following sections:

- Why a Coordinated Plan? This section explains why this plan is important.
- Who does this Coordinated Plan serve? This section lists the target population groups for this Coordinated Plan.
- Plan Structure. This section describes the overall structure of this plan.

Why a Coordinated Plan?

There is a common need to travel throughout the Mat-Su Borough in day-to-day life—whether that means getting to work, making it to a medical appointment on time, running errands, shopping for groceries, or visiting loved ones.

For many people, getting from point A to point B can be a major barrier to living life fully: older adults, people with disabilities, veterans, people with low incomes who may not be able to afford a car, youth, and people who speak limited English. (More information on target population groups is available in Chapter 3.)

This is especially true in rural areas of the Borough, where distances between destinations can be very long, weather can present challenges, and public transit is less feasible. Even when destinations are nearby, invisible barriers like city limits can push places out of reach for reasons that aren’t clear to most people. This is to say nothing of visible barriers like highways, railroads, and rivers that can have similar effects.

How can we address transportation needs and fill gaps for these target population groups? Ultimately, answering this question is the purpose of this Coordinated Plan.

Key Terms

What is a Coordinated Plan?

This document is the second update of the Coordinated Plan for the Mat-Su Borough. Updates to coordinated plans must take place every 5 years.

Coordinated plans aim to improve transportation services for older adults, people with disabilities, and other marginalized populations. They are more formally known as coordinated public transit-human service transportation plans, and have a specific legal context at the federal, state, and regional levels.

What is the Matanuska-Susitna Borough?

The Matanuska-Susitna Borough, also known as the Mat-Su Borough, is located in south central Alaska. It is aptly named for both the Matanuska and Susitna rivers, which run through the Borough and empty into the Cook Inlet. It is one of the most rapidly growing areas in Alaska and is one of the few agricultural areas in the state. The seat of the Borough is the city of Palmer, though both the cities of Palmer and Wasilla have the highest population densities in the region. One of the unique demographic challenges the Borough experiences that is unlike most other regions is that the area has very high percentages of marginalized populations when compared to other places. This presents a great challenge, especially related to transit and coordination. Transit is a huge need in the Mat-Su for these target populations; however, investment in transit and mobility is relatively limited. For more information on the target populations, see “who does this coordinated plan serve”, below.



What is the Advisory Committee?

The advisory committee for this project includes transit providers and major stakeholders in the planning and provision of transportation services. Most of the members on the advisory committee also participated in the 2018 plan update, allowing for consistency in planning and communication. The previous lead agency for coordinated planning efforts was the Mat-Su Health Foundation. Now that the area has experienced such rapid growth, the Mat-Su Borough is the current lead agency for coordinated planning efforts. More on regional growth and future planning around the U.S. Census may be found later in this plan.







Who Does this Plan Serve?




The primary focus of the Matanuska-Susitna Borough’s Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan Update is to improve transportation options and access to services for the following target population groups:

- Older adults (aged 65 and older)
- Youth (ages 10 to 17)
- Individuals who are:
 - Living with disabilities
 - Living in poverty
 - Limited in English proficiency
- Tribal nations
- Veterans

Historically, these population groups have higher rates of transit dependency and lower access to personal vehicles. As described in Figure 1-1, these conditions make mobility a challenge, particularly in rural areas and in locations without access to public transit services. The following sections provide a further look into the socioeconomic characteristics of the target populations within the study area, as well as a discussion of major trip generators and employers in the region.

Figure 1-1 Mobility Challenges of Target Populations


Target Population	Common Mobility Challenges
 Older Adults (aged 65 and older)	There are a variety of reasons older adults may drive less frequently or even at all, including health challenges, comfort behind the wheel, and the need to use or bring mobility devices. As such, older adults may need additional support for mobility, and transit can help meet that need.
 Youth Populations (ages 10 to 17)	Youth populations, particularly those younger than 18, may have issues accessing key destinations like schools, after school care, or community centers, due in part to the fact that many cannot yet drive themselves; however, some families may have only one or no vehicle at all. Further, families may not live in a location where they have direct access to public transportation services.
 Individuals with a Disability	Individuals with disabilities may have physical or cognitive challenges that make it difficult to operate a vehicle, or to travel on their own without assistance from others. Individuals with disabilities may need additional support for mobility from caregivers or family members.
 Individuals Living in Poverty	Individuals living in poverty tend to use transit more frequently than the general public because they may not have the financial ability to purchase, own, maintain, or fuel a personal vehicle. However, even public transportation services may be cost-prohibitive for these populations.

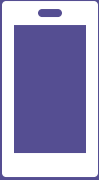
Target Population	Common Mobility Challenges
 Indigenous Populations	<p>Indigenous populations commonly live on tribal lands, often located in more “rural” and isolated areas of a given region or state. Transportation is often more challenging for tribal areas because of difficult access, as well as the fact that many individuals often fall under other target categories (i.e., may have a disability, be an older adult, or medically frail).</p>
 Veterans	<p>Veterans often face several barriers to receiving care and may have financial challenges that make travel costs for healthcare appointments burdensome. Veterans living in rural areas must travel longer distances and may not have immediate access to healthcare providers or specialists. Further, many Veterans need to access the Veterans Administration and/or hospitals, which may be long distances away and have a limited number of appointments.</p>
 Limited English Speakers	<p>Limited English speakers may face additional challenges accessing and understanding available transportation programs, including public transit. The needs of this demographic group are important to consider improving access to services such as healthcare, grocery shopping, and job access.</p>

Two additional target populations this plan focuses on are households with no vehicles and unhoused individuals. Individuals and families with no vehicle have limited mobility options when there is no direct access to transit services. Without transit, these individuals must rely on rides from friends and family members. Similarly, unhoused and transitional populations often struggle with limited access to transit and often have limited means to pay for public transit services. These populations significantly benefit when transit services are designed to provide access to government services, employment, and food access.

Transit Modes Included in this Coordinated Plan

For the purposes of this plan, two modes available in the Mat-Su Borough are included in the Coordinated Plan:


 <h3>Commuter/Express Bus Routes</h3> <p>Long distance service for passengers needing access to employment, education, medical, and shopping opportunities not otherwise available in their area.</p>	
Service Area: Operates from main transit centers or park-and-rides to designated stops within a given city.	Service Schedule: Fixed times, with limited stops.
<i>How does it operate?</i>	<i>Vehicles</i>
Service is more frequent during “peak commute periods,” with limited scheduled service during the middle of the day.	Uses larger vehicles (40- to 60-foot articulated buses), allowing transit providers to move people quickly along major corridors.


 <h3>Demand Response</h3> <p>Demand response transit service is “demand-based,” operating based on the needs or schedules of the customers. It is the second largest type of public transit service in the U.S.</p>	
Service Area: Found in low-density areas or ones that are geographically widespread.	Service Schedule: Usually schedule-based, with customers scheduling 2-24 hours in advance, or subscription-based, with customers having a standing reservation to use the service.
<i>How does it operate?</i>	<i>Vehicles</i>
Some models utilize technology that allows for real-time scheduling, but most providers require reservations in advance.	Utilizes small or medium sized vehicles, such as minivans, passenger vans, or larger “cutaway” buses, typically equipped with wheelchair spaces and wheelchair lifts in order to service all passengers, no matter their abilities.


These modes represent just two out of a list of ten that are commonly represented in coordinated plans. The following section provides an overview of the other eight modes, which are not part of Mat-Su’s Coordinated Plan.


What Modes of Transportation are Included in Other Coordinated Plans?


Coordinated plans include all modes of transportation available in a given region, including those that connect from other areas into the region. For individuals new to transit, the following provides a quick guide to eight additional modes of transportation outside the two available in the Mat-Su Borough Coordinated Plan.


 1		
<h3>Passenger Rail</h3> <p>Moves many customers over long distances, usually with high frequencies.</p>		
Service Area:	Service Schedule:	
Large urban areas	Fixed times and stops	
<i>Sub-Types</i>	<i>Where Does it Operate?</i>	<i>Vehicles</i>
Heavy Rail	Older "legacy" city systems (Chicago and Boston)	Electric rail or diesel fuel trains
Commuter Rail	Cities with newer rail service, (Austin)	
Light Rail	San Francisco and Dallas	Overhead electric catenary system


 2	
<h3>Bus Rapid Transit</h3> <p>Implemented when fixed route bus service on a given corridor is overloaded.</p>	
Service Area:	Service Schedule:
Major corridors in large cities.	Fixed, with timed stops spaced to allow vehicles to move more quickly than traditional fixed routes.
<i>How does it operate?</i>	<i>Vehicles</i>
Cities often dedicate a traffic lane to BRT, with signal queuing to allow the service to operate competitively when compared to traditional fixed route	Uses larger vehicles (40- to 60-foot articulated buses), that allow transit providers to move people quickly along major corridors.


 Fixed Route Bus 3	
<p>Buses operating on predetermined routes with set schedules and stops; the most common form of public transportation in the U.S.</p>	
<p>Service Area: Typically found in urbanized areas, but also in rural areas where such service is better suited to a community.</p>	<p>Service Schedule: Formal, posted schedules and designated stops allow passengers to plan ahead on when and where to catch the bus. <i>Fixed-route bus service requires what the Federal Transit Administration calls “complementary paratransit” service, per the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Complementary paratransit, also known more simply as “paratransit” service, is detailed in a dedicated type below.</i></p>
<p><i>How does it operate?</i></p>	<p><i>Vehicles</i></p>
<p>Service is more frequent during “peak commute periods” with limited scheduled service during the middle of the day.</p>	<p>Typically utilizes buses ranging in size from 25-40 feet; however, vans and other smaller vehicles may be utilized depending on ridership.</p>

 Flex Route Bus 4	
<p>Also known as “deviated fixed-route,” this transit service operates on a scheduled fixed route where the bus may “deviate” off-route at the request and/or need of the customer(s).</p>	
<p>Service Area: A good alternative for areas where fixed-route service may not be a good fit—for example, suburban and rural areas.</p>	<p>Service Schedule: Flexible routes are typically designed with enough “slack” in the schedule to allow for deviations, yet still allow the bus to run on time for scheduled stops. <i>Complementary paratransit is not required with flex-route service, because the vehicle may deviate off route based on customer needs.</i></p>
<p><i>How does it operate?</i></p>	<p><i>Vehicles</i></p>
<p>Customers request real-time route deviations as needed.</p>	<p>Typically utilizes buses ranging in size from 25-40 feet; however, vans and other smaller vehicles may be utilized depending on ridership.</p>

 <h2>Paratransit Service</h2> 5	
<p>Paratransit (also known as complementary paratransit) service is designed to complement fixed-route transit services; the Americans with Disabilities Act (passed in 1990) requires that transit operators offering fixed-route services must offer “comparable” service to individuals with disabilities.</p>	
<p>Service Area: Wherever an agency provides fixed route(s), it must also offer complementary paratransit within ¾ mile of the fixed route.</p>	<p>Service Schedule: Service must be provided during the same days and times as the fixed route service operation.</p>
<i>How does it operate?</i>	<i>Vehicles</i>
<p>This type of transit service may offer three main types of operations based on the policies of the provider and the needs of the customer: curb-to-curb, door-to-door, and door-through-door. Paratransit service is the costliest for a provider to offer and is offered by larger agencies in urbanized areas that provide fixed routes.</p>	<p>Paratransit service utilizes smaller vehicles (usually 25-foot “cutaway” buses) that have wheelchair lifts or ramps, with one or more spaces for wheelchairs where they can be safely ‘tied down.’</p>

 <h2>Ride Share/Transportation Network Companies (TNCs)</h2> 6	
<p>Ride share, also known as ride-hailing, is a form of transportation service that is a hybrid between demand-response and taxi service.</p>	
<p>Service Area: TNCs are typically found in urbanized areas, though some may exist in rural settings.</p>	<p>Service Schedule: Passengers request service through mobile phone apps, usually on-demand from a specific pick-up point. However, service may also be scheduled in advance. Passengers may also request a private or shared ride, depending on timing and cost.</p>
<i>How does it operate?</i>	<i>Vehicles</i>
<p>Typically not offered by a public provider, but a series of private providers, referred to as transportation network companies (TNCs). Since rides are often offered by private companies, price escalation may be a significant factor in whether a customer chooses to book a ride through this service.</p>	<p>Typically offered in cars or SUVs; some larger transit providers offer ride sharing service that is pre-coordinated within the agency, utilizing an agency vehicle, such as a car or van.</p>

 <h2>Volunteer Transportation Program</h2> <p>Volunteer transportation operates a variety of ways, but centrally relies on volunteer drivers to drive passengers.</p>		7
<p>Service Area: Volunteer transportation programs are great because they can be implemented in any setting: rural, urban, or suburban.</p>	<p>Service Schedule: These types of programs typically have rides scheduled in advance, though some may operate on-demand service, depending on driver availability.</p>	
<i>How does it operate?</i>	<i>Vehicles</i>	
<p>These programs are typically the lowest cost for agencies to offer; however, insurance and liability provide challenges to implementation. During the pandemic, volunteer driver programs came to a halt, and many have yet to recover.</p>	<p>These programs may offer their own vehicles (cars or vans) or may ask that the volunteer provide their own vehicle in exchange for cost reimbursements for fuel, mileage, and other costs.</p>	

 <h2>Carpool/Vanpool Programs</h2> <p>Carpools and vanpools are another low-cost alternative to serve anywhere from 3-18 passengers.</p>		8
<p>Service Area: These services are common in rural and suburban areas where a common group of individuals need to travel long distances, and where commuter transit is not a viable option.</p>	<p>Service Schedule: Carpool and vanpool programs are typically designed around work schedules, i.e. 8-5pm. Expenses for the rider vary, based on trip distance and frequency of use, though these options are often less expensive than driving alone.</p>	
<i>How does it operate?</i>	<i>Vehicles</i>	
<p>These programs may be offered through a transit service provider or may be more organic, established by a group of individuals who need service to common locations, such as an employer or education institution.</p>	<p>Some providers offer cars, minivans, or passenger vans for those signed up for the service, and those vehicles are usually left overnight at a common location, such as a shopping center or park and ride.</p>	

How Does this Coordinated Plan Fit into the Federal, State, and Regional Context?

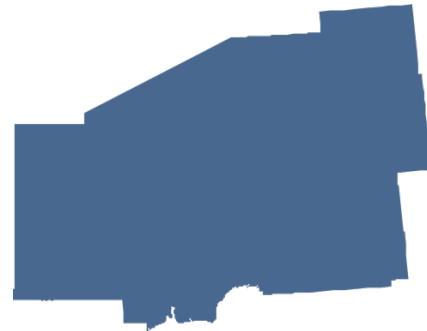
Federal

The Enhanced Mobility for Individuals and Individuals with Disabilities Program (Section 5310) is a federal source of transportation funding.

To receive funding under this program, projects must be part of a locally developed and approved coordinated public transit-human services plan—often simply called a coordinated plan.

Furthermore, coordinated plans must:

- Incorporate participation by older adults and individuals with disabilities, as well as other stakeholders, including representatives of public, private, and non-profit service providers.
- Be updated every 5 years—or every 4 years for areas that are in non-attainment.



Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (ADOT&PF) Context

According to the state's website, coordinated plans are required to have specific elements to meet FTA requirements. ADOT&PF does not approve a community's plan, only certifies to FTA all required elements are in the plan. Coordinated plans must:

1. Be locally developed. Evidenced by public participation that must include seniors, individuals with disabilities, representatives of public, private, non-profit and human services transportation providers, and other members of the public.
2. Include information on:
 - a. The community background;
 - b. Inventory of local resources and services;
 - c. Needs assessment;
 - d. Gaps in service;
 - e. Strategies;
 - f. Priority of Projects;
 - g. Signature page of participating agencies.
3. Resolution from local governing body adopting the plan
4. Must be updated every five years.

Plan Structure

This coordinated plan includes seven chapters and one appendix. Chapters 2 through 4 take stock of existing conditions and lay the groundwork for the rest of the document. Chapter 5 presents updated regional goals and objectives. Chapters 6 and 7 explain implementation strategies, timelines, and performance measures. Chapter 8 looks ahead to future considerations.



Executive Summary

Summary of Coordinated Plan.

Chapter 1. Introduction

This chapter covers the Coordinated Plan’s background and purpose, populations served (and engaged), and plan structure.

Chapter 2. Transportation Resources in the Region

This chapter provides a list of current transportation providers and planning agencies in the Mat-Su Borough.

Chapter 3. Transportation Needs and Gaps

This chapter assesses the known transportation needs and gaps, with demographic maps and supporting geographic analysis.

Chapter 4. Review of Existing Plans, Studies, and Reports

This chapter describes how this Coordinated Plan aligns with other municipal, rural, and statewide transportation planning efforts.

Chapter 5. Goals and Strategies

This chapter articulates the goals and objectives (or “strategies”) of this Coordinated Plan.

Chapter 6. Plan Implementation and Funding Sources

This chapter prioritizes strategies, and proposes an implementation plan—including priority rankings, lead organization(s), and support organization(s)—to put into action when the Coordinated Plan is approved.

Chapter 7. Looking Ahead / Conclusions

This chapter includes annual reporting recommendations, public engagement planning, and future considerations related to census impacts and future transit plans.

Appendix



Chapter 2. Existing Conditions

Demographics

According to the American Community Survey (ACS), the Mat-Su Borough has 24,618 square miles of land and is the 7th largest borough in Alaska by size. The population of the Borough was 107,081 according to the most recent decennial census.

In Figure 2-1, these individual groups represent between 7% and 30% of the total population, respectively in the region, underscoring the need for transportation services that ensure that the needs of the region’s most vulnerable groups are being met. It is important to point out, however, that though the individual groups comprise up to 30% of the local population, when added up, the percent of the population in the Borough that is socially or politically marginalized is much greater (for example, youth and Veterans alone make up 46% of the total population, not to mention the others). With such large numbers in need, it truly underscores the need for more transportation services and further coordination amongst the providers. The Mat-Su Borough is unique compared with other coordinated planning regions in that it has a higher percentage of the target populations than most other areas.

Figure 2-1 Target Populations

Population Group	2021	% of MSB Population
Older Adults (age 65+)	14,135	15%
Youth (age 10 to 17)	27,841	29%
Individuals with a Disability	13,921	14%
Individuals Living in Poverty	11,779	12%
Veterans	16,062	17%
American Indian / Alaska Native	6,844	7%
Limited English Speakers	6,746	7%

Sources: 2021 1-Year ACS Estimate; 2020 5-Year ACS Estimates

Data for the maps representing existing conditions comes from the American Community Survey (ACS) 5-year Estimates Selected Detailed Population Tables. The data was collected from 2016 - 2020 and released in March 2022. This is the most up-to-date data available by census tract. The ACS website explains that the boundaries (urban, rural, etc.) are based on the data collected for the 2010 census and may not "reflect the results of ongoing urbanization."



Older Adults

Older adults account for 15% of the population of the study area. The share of older adults in the region is higher than that of the state (13%) as observed in Figure 2-2.

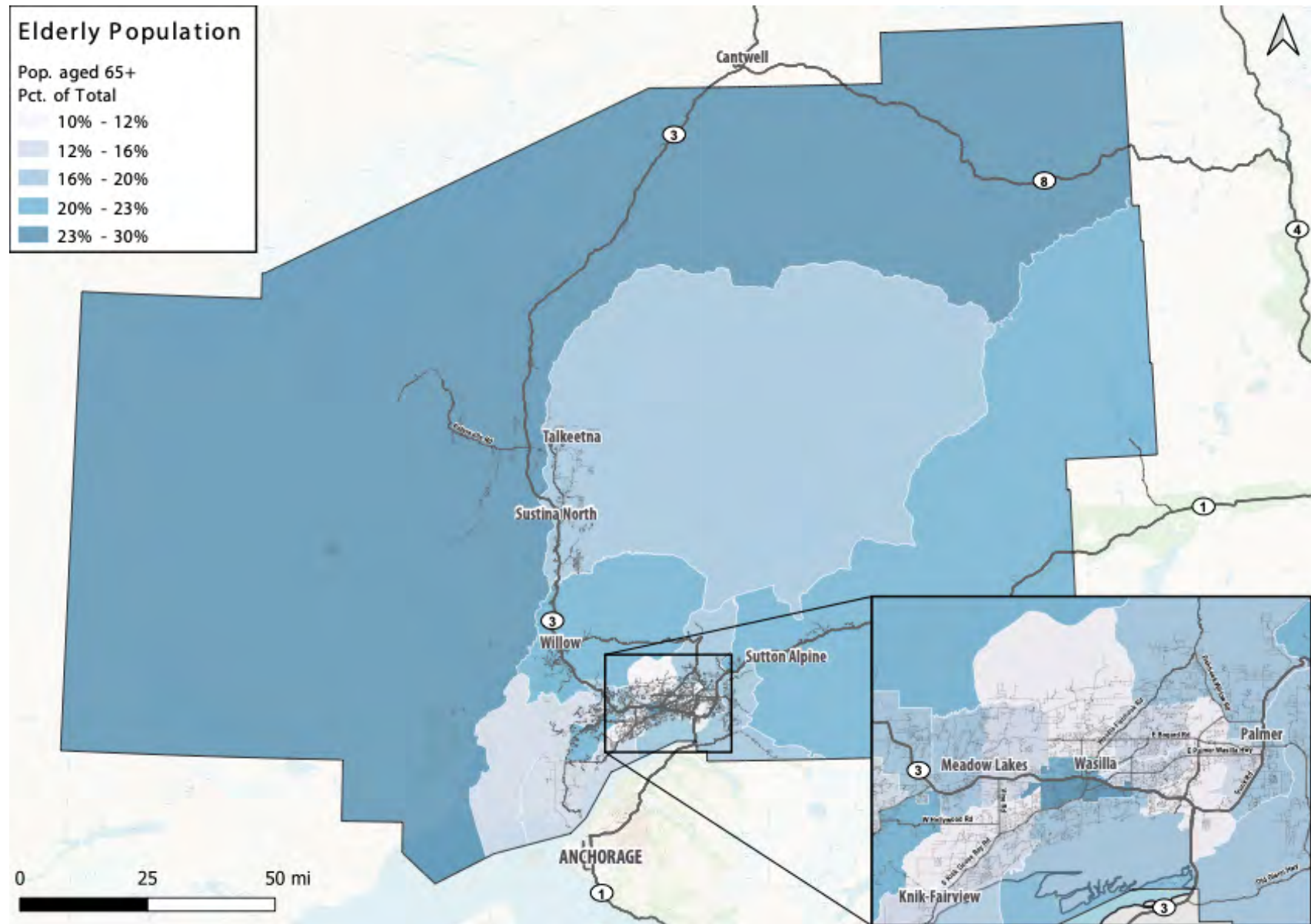
Figure 2-2 Older Adult Residents

	2020	% of Population
Mat-Su Borough	14,135	15%
State of Alaska	95,341	13%

Source: 2021 1-year ACS estimates; 2020 5-year ACS estimates

The distribution of older adults in the region can be seen in Figure 2-3. Concentrations of older adults can be found south of the largest population center, Wasilla, and in the far more rural areas of the MSB to the west and north.

Figure 2-3 Distribution of Residents Aged 65 or Older





Youth

Individuals aged 10 to 17 years old account for 29% of the population of the study area. The share of the youth population is higher than the state (25%) as observed in Figure 2-4.

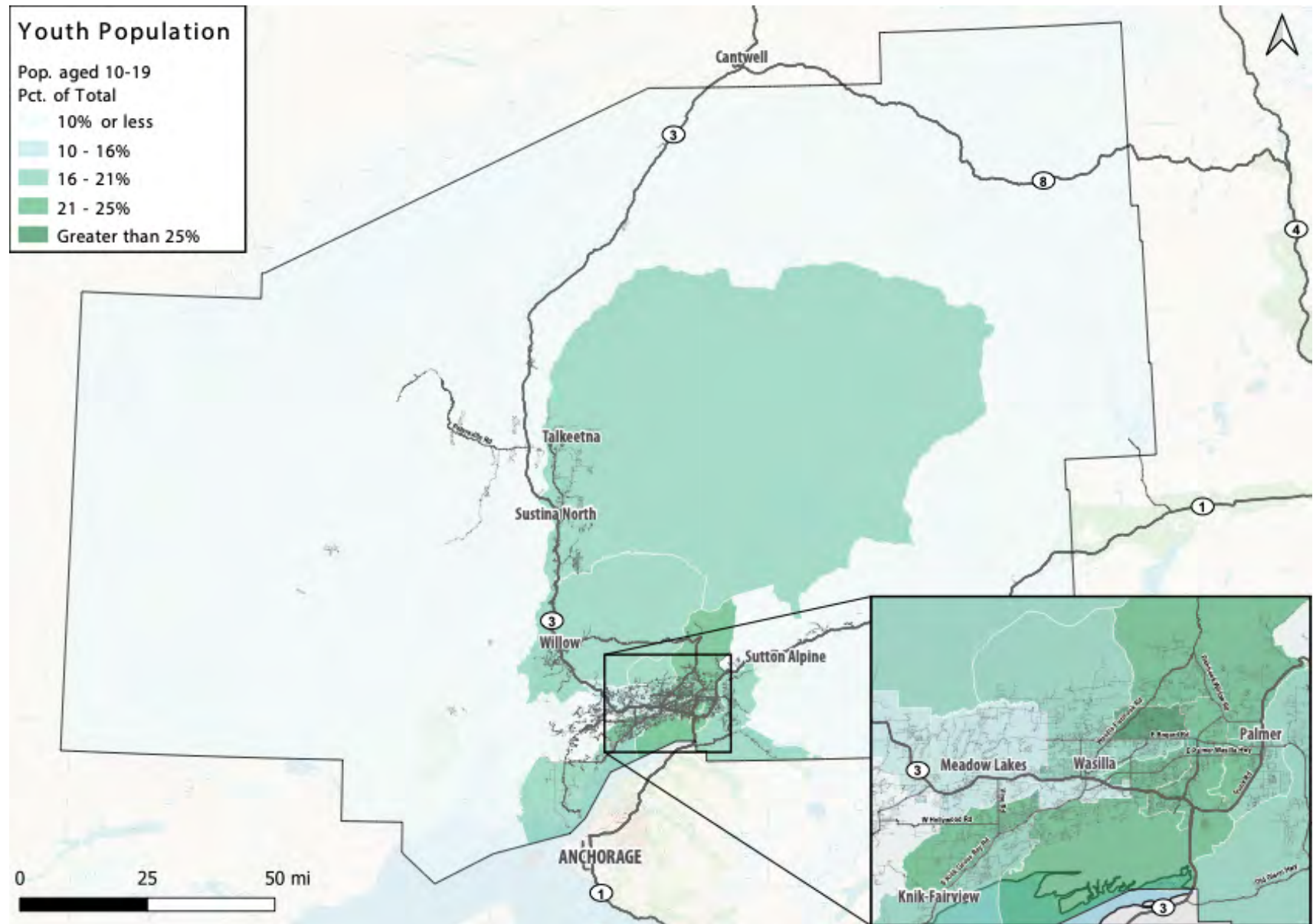
Figure 2-4 Youth Residents (Age 10 to 17)

	2021	% of Population
Mat-Su Borough	27,841	29%
State of Alaska	182,500	25%

Source: 2021 1-Year ACS Estimate

The distribution of youth in the region is shown in Figure 2-5. Concentrations of youth residents can be found in the largest population centers, primarily in and around Wasilla and Palmer. Smaller pockets with notable concentrations include Willow, Susitna North, and Talkeetna.

Figure 2-5 Distribution of Youth Residents (Age 10 to 17)





Individuals with Disabilities

Individuals with disabilities account for 14% of the population of the study area. The share of individuals with a disability is slightly higher than the population in the state (13%) as observed in Figure 2-6.

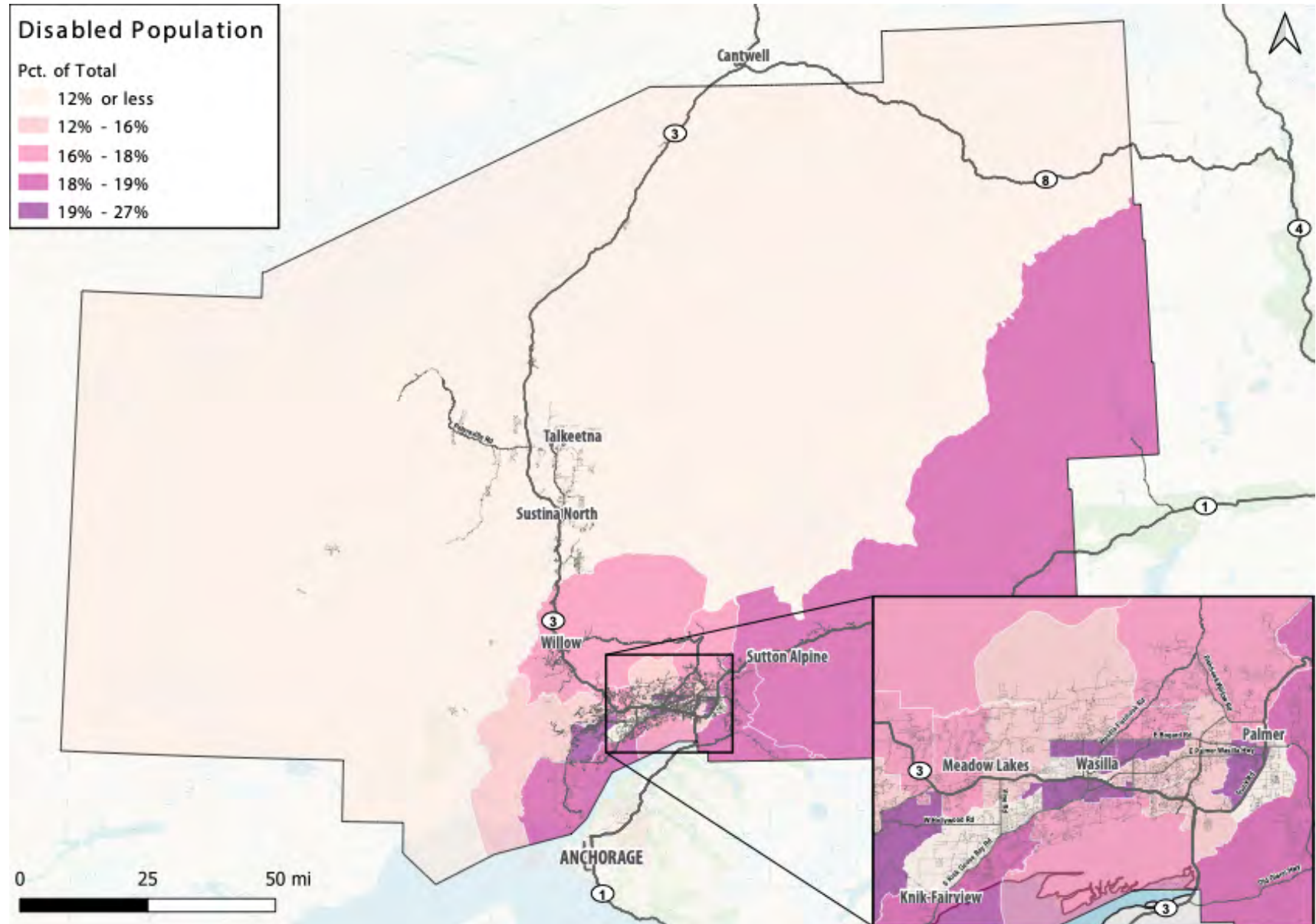
Figure 2-6 Individuals with a Disability

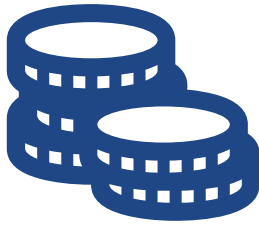
	2021	% of Population
Mat-Su Borough	13,921	14%
State of Alaska	95,340	13%

Source: 2021 5-Year ACS Estimates

The distribution of individuals with disabilities in the study area is shown in Figure 2-7. Concentrations of individuals with disabilities are found around Wasilla, Palmer, and south of Meadow Lakes, however, there is a significant concentration of individuals with disabilities in the southeast area of the Borough, particularly Sutton Alpine.

Figure 2-7 Population Density of Individuals with Disabilities





Individuals Living in Poverty

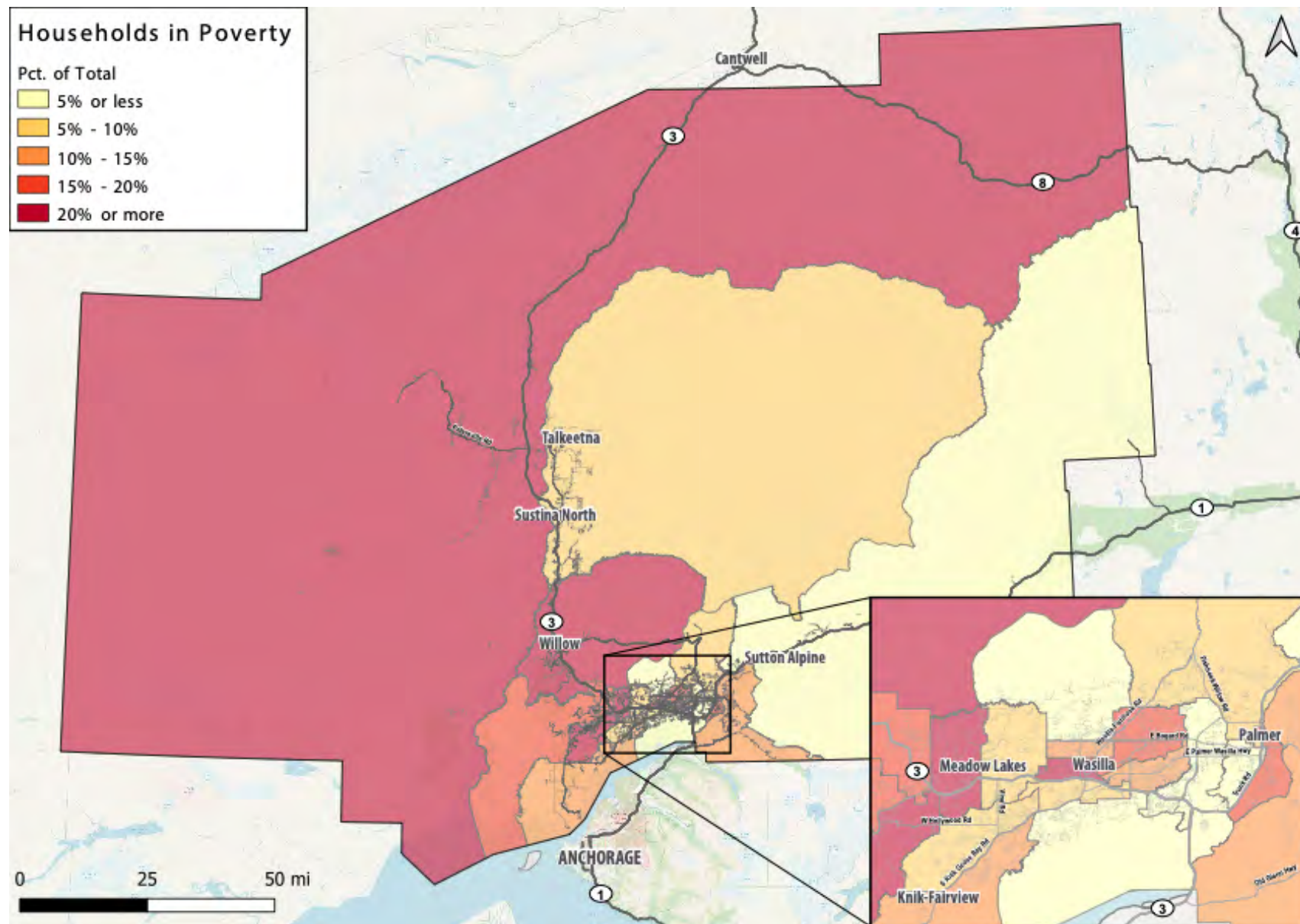
Individuals living in poverty account for 12% of the population of the study area. The share of individuals living in poverty within the study area is higher than the share at the statewide level (10.5%) as observed in Figure 2-8.

Figure 2-8 Individuals Living in Poverty

	2021	% of Population
Mat-Su Borough	11,779	12%
State of Alaska	77,006	10.5%

Source: 2021 5-Year ACS Estimates

Figure 2-9 Population Density of Individuals Living in Poverty





Indigenous Populations

Indigenous people fall within the target population category for coordinated planning efforts. Often, tribal nations are located on lands that would otherwise be considered “rural” and are historically underserved by public transportation services. In many cases, indigenous people may spread across multiple target categories: Veteran, low-income, at-risk youth, older adult, and individuals with a disability. Therefore, it is critical to include indigenous populations in coordinated planning efforts.

Additionally, the FTA has recently announced additional funding for the Tribal Transit Program: on October 11, 2022, the FTA announced an award of over \$8 million in grants to 25 Tribal governments for projects that support transit services for American Indian Tribes and Alaska Native Villages, communities, or groups in rural areas.

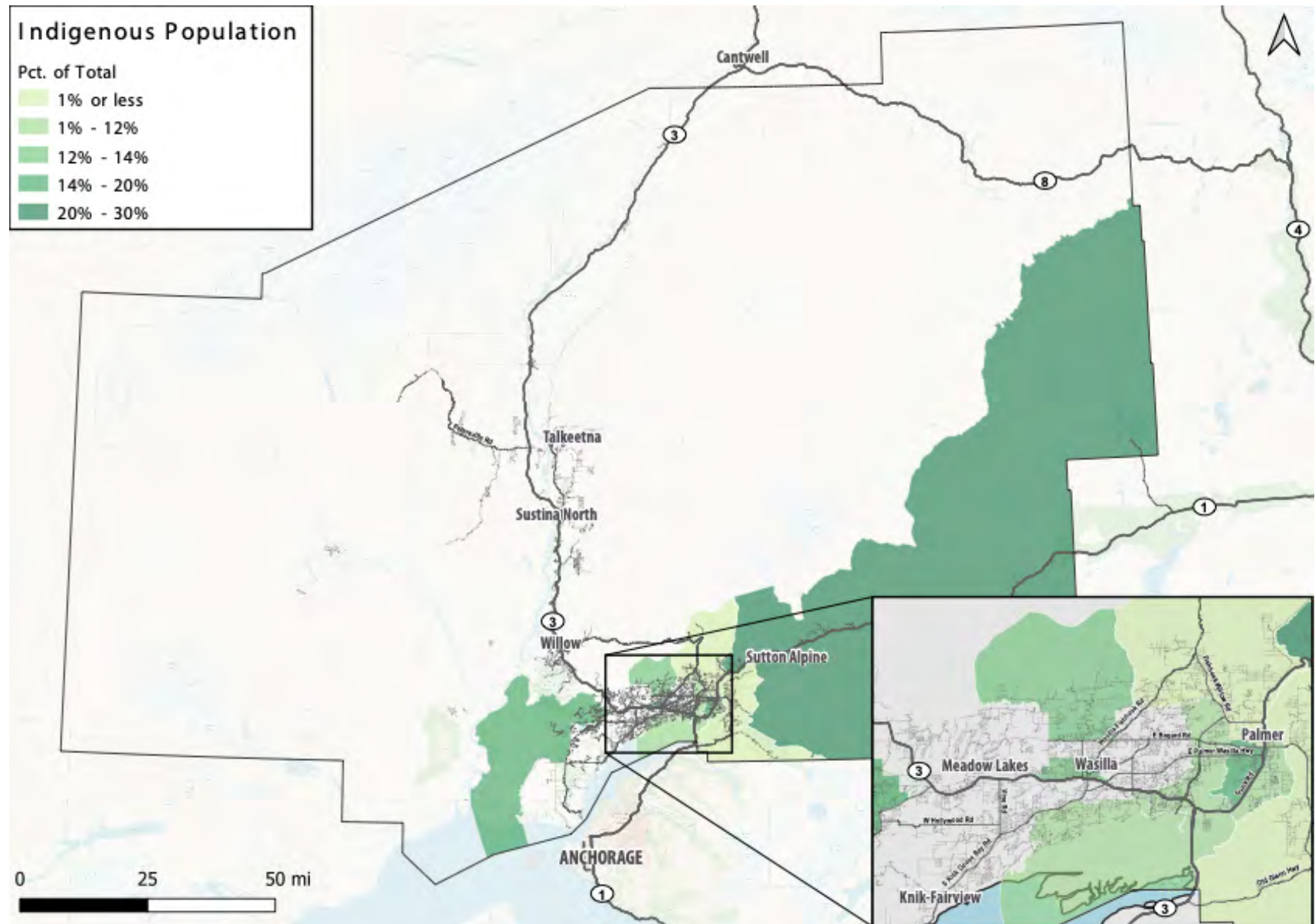
American Indians / Alaska Natives account for 7% of the population of the study area. The share of individuals in the study area is lower than the share at the statewide level (16%) as observed in Figure 2-10.

Figure 2-10 American Indian / Alaska Native

	2021	% of Population
Mat-Su Borough	6,844	7%
State of Alaska	117,228	16%

Source: 2021 5-Year ACS Estimates

Figure 2-11 Density of Indigenous Populations





Veterans

Veterans account for 17% of the total population of the study area. The share of the veteran population in the study area is higher than the state average (11%) as observed in Figure 2-12. The areas with the highest share of this demographic group are to the west and north of the Borough, particularly in rural/low-density areas, in Meadow Lakes, and south of Wasilla.

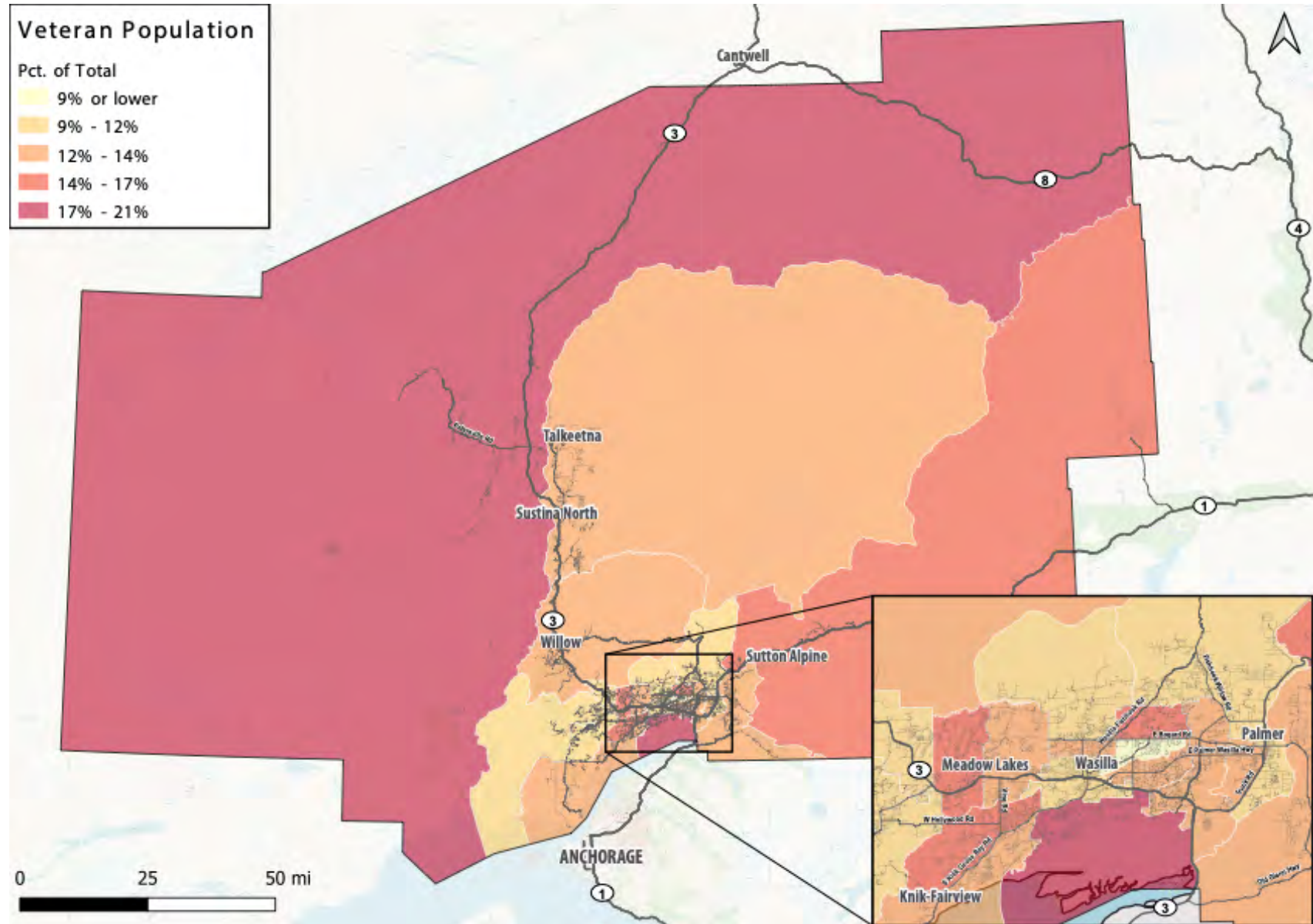
Figure 2-12 Veteran Residents

	2021	% of Population
Mat-Su Borough	16,062	17%
State of Alaska	80,673	11%

Source: 2021 5-Year ACS Estimates

The distribution of veterans in the study area is shown in Figure 2-13. Current Veterans Affairs (VA) facilities are located in Wasilla, (Mat-Su VA Clinic), Anchorage (Alaska VA Healthcare system), as well as Vet Centers in Wasilla and Anchorage.

Figure 2-13 Veteran Population Density





Limited English Speakers

Limited English speakers account for 7% of the population of the study area. The share of limited English speakers in the study area is slightly higher than the share at the statewide level (6%) as observed in Figure 2-14.

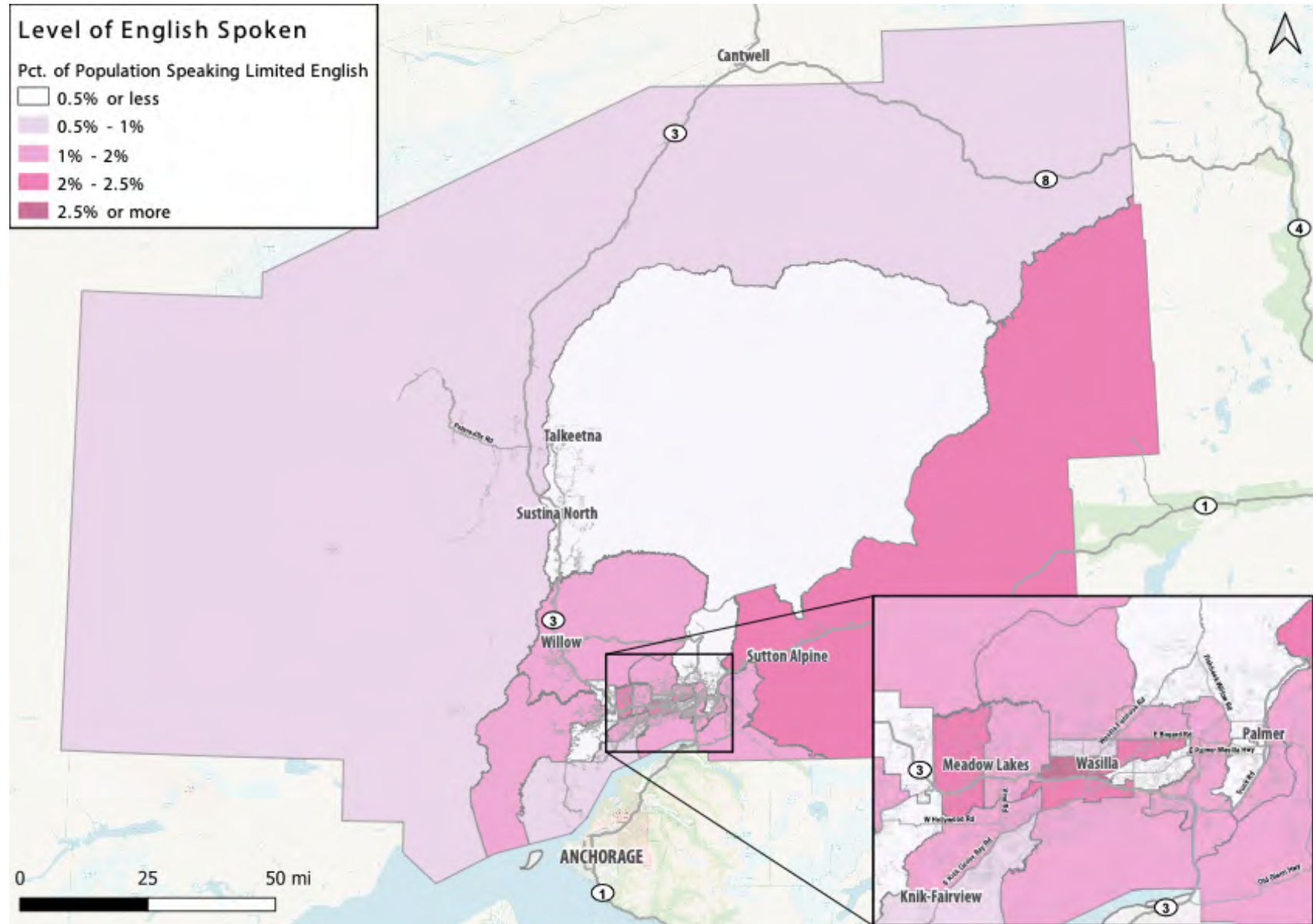
Figure 2-14 Limited English Speakers

	2021	% of Population
Mat-Su Borough	6,746	7%
State of Alaska	44,003	6%

Source: 2021 5-Year ACS Estimates

The distribution of limited English speakers in the study area is shown in Figure 2-15.

Figure 2-15 Density of Individuals with Limited English Proficiency



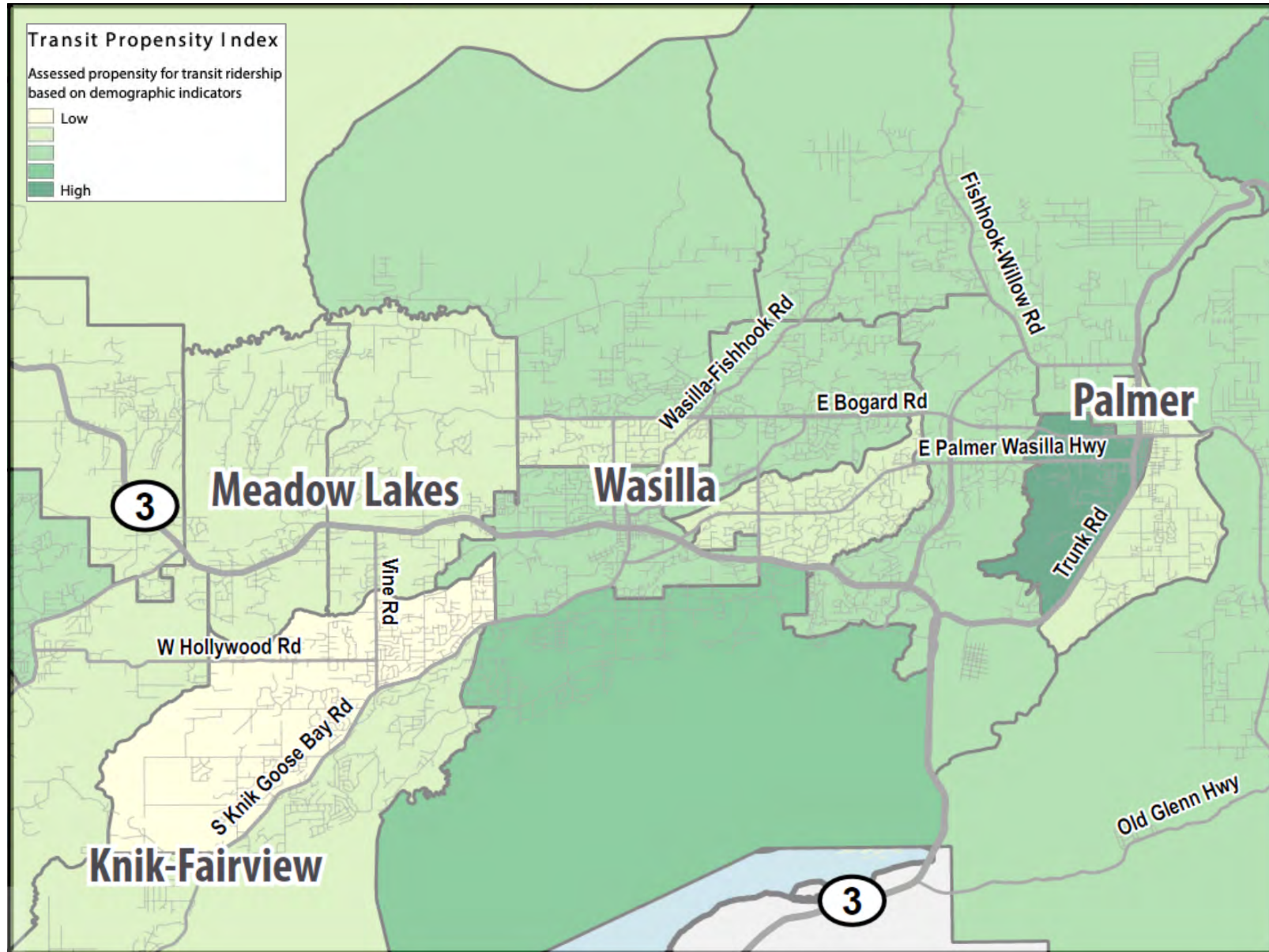


Transit Propensity Index

Transit propensity is a concept that seeks to identify potential (or likely) areas of increased transit need based on spatial geographic and socioeconomic factors. Figure 2-16 illustrates the locations within the study area that likely have the greatest need for public transportation services. The transit propensity analysis identifies the cumulative densities of demographic populations most often associated with high transit need, including older adults, individuals with disabilities, individuals living in poverty, and zero-vehicle households.

Transit need is often closely aligned with compact, urban areas—which commonly have the highest percentages of populations identifiable as ‘politically or socially marginalized.’ The Mat-Su Borough presents an exception to the usual profile because its marginalized populations—for whom this plan is being designed—live across a vast rural area, complicating the situation and making transit planning more difficult.

Figure 2-16 Transit Propensity Index Map





Transit Deserts

Transit deserts are areas that are not currently being served by public transportation services. Individuals living in those areas face increased barriers to accessing basic services if they do not have access to a personal vehicle. It is important to note that there are many areas not currently served by transit; these areas are typically located in the extremely rural geographic locations of the Borough. Some of these areas may be considered “off-grid”, in which case they may not be necessary to serve. However, a number of individuals associated with target populations for this plan live in off-grid areas, making service for these populations a bit of a challenge should they become unable to drive or lack a personal vehicle.



Trip Generators and Travel Patterns

The expansive geography of the region—along with limited-service reach, two lane highways, and rapid population growth—can make travel difficult and time-consuming. Trip generators are concentrated in the more populated areas, including Wasilla, Palmer, and Anchorage, with significant commuter travel along Glenn Highway. Target population groups (older adults, youth, individuals living in poverty, veterans, limited English speakers, and individuals with disabilities) are likely to travel to medical facilities, human service agencies, or veterans’ facilities throughout the study area, as well as in and between their respective communities.

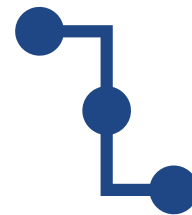
The Mat-Su Valley is one of the fastest-growing regions in Alaska, with hundreds of new residents moving into the region every year. According to the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development (DOL&WD), the State of Alaska and Borough grew rapidly from the 1970s through the 2000s. Around 2010, the Alaskan population began to stabilize, growing only 3 percent between 2010 and 2022. By contrast, the Borough’s population grew 22 percent over the same period. These trends are projected to continue, with the DOL&WD forecasting a 38 percent increase in population within the MSB by 2050, compared with only 4 percent statewide.

As population and employment patterns shift throughout the region, transportation plays an important role in how people access their jobs. The top industries in the region include government, professional and technical services, accommodation, and food services (10%), retail trade (10%), and health care and social assistance. The

industries with the largest regional employment growth include professional and technical services, healthcare and social assistance, educational services, and transportation and warehousing. To access employment opportunities (in addition to medical care and educational opportunities), many residents must travel long distances, particularly in rural areas.

REVIEW OF PROVIDERS IN REGION

Transit in the Mat-Su Valley is a major component of the overall transportation network; it is a contributor to quality-of-life in the Mat-Su Valley with the promise of safe journeys, connectivity, and expanded accessibility and options for people who cannot—or will not—own or access an automobile.



Because it is a service provided in the public interest, transit is rarely profitable. To share the burdens and challenges of providing such a service, partnerships may be formed to ensure the funding, operating, and managing of transit. For example, a public agency could be responsible for funding and marketing a new bus route that serves the population, but they may contract private or non-profit entities to operate the service itself (including the hiring, training, and managing of drivers, fleet ownership/maintenance, and customer service). The structure of such partnerships will depend on context and other factors, such as financial constraints, liabilities, and human capital.

This section focuses on shared and mass transportation systems sometimes known as “community transit” or the “coordinated transportation system” as part of a larger network of transportation options. It is arranged primarily on the definition of the routes (fixed-route vs. demand-response) and secondarily on the nature of the provider (public vs. private/non-profit).

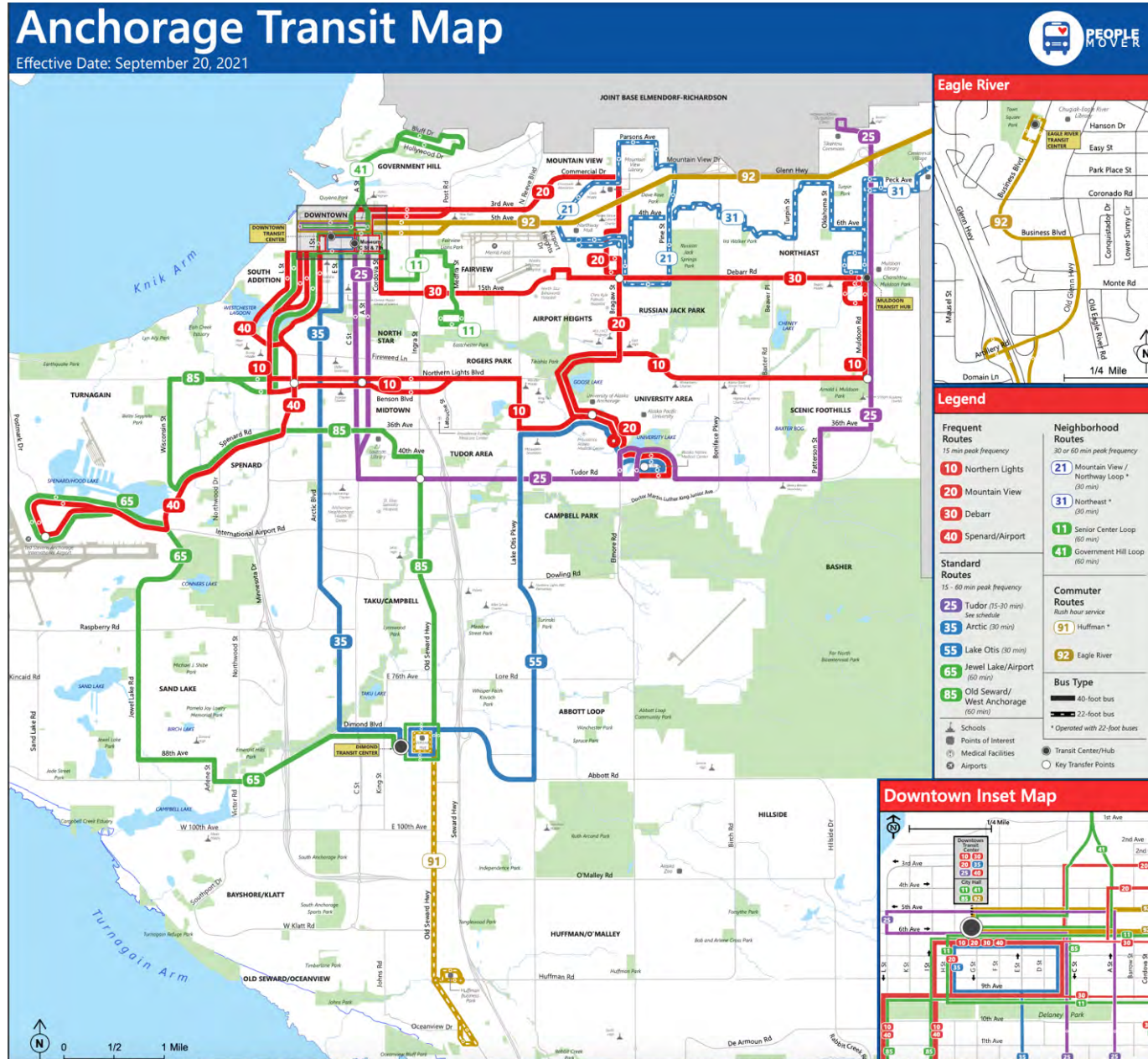
Fixed-Route Transit

Fixed-route transit is the most commonly understood public transportation mode. By design, fixed-route is intended to arrive and depart at predictable intervals at all its designated stops.



Fixed-route transit is typically planned for maximum efficiency on public roadways. The closest fixed route system to the Mat-Su Valley is PeopleMover, offered through the Municipality of Anchorage. As referenced in the stakeholder interview themes, many individuals travel from the Mat-Su Valley into Anchorage (and vice versa) for jobs, shopping, medical, and educational purposes.

Figure 2-17 Anchorage People Mover System Map



In an ideal transit network, fixed-route service would be provided at frequent intervals across much of the day. However, there are limitations to realizing an ideal fixed-route network, including:

- **Financial constraints** for transit capital and operations
- **Timing of transfers** to connecting fixed routes
- **The extent to which sidewalks and bicycle facilities leading to and from transit stops are universally accessible**, in acceptable condition, and designed for short and pleasant trips
- **The availability of connecting transportation from one's front door to the transit station/stop** for circumstances in which one cannot safely or conveniently walk, roll, or bike to the transit stop

Fixed-route transit can help provide relief to coordinated and human service transit in more circumstances than before - but it will vary by trip type and origin location. For example, the PeopleMover system is working to better coordinate with transit services from the Valley through Valley Transit's services, but sometimes service hours, safe connection areas, and frequencies may be a limitation. For communities already served by fixed-route transit, coordination of a timed transfer or a safe walk to the bus stop is a more cost-effective option that allows resources for demand-response services to be freed up for places that are isolated from fixed-route transit.

Public and Non-Profit Fixed Route Options

Valley Transit

The mission of Valley Transit is to provide accessible, sustainable, reliable, efficient, and quality public transportation. In 2014, the State of Alaska mandated consolidation of Valley Transit with Mat-Su Community Transit (MASCOT), and Valley Transit has been the foremost provider of commuter and demand response services in the Valley, which includes the following services:

- Regional commuter service connecting Big Lake, Meadow Lakes, Wasilla, and Anchorage
- Zone based demand response service in Houston, Big Lake, Meadow Lakes, Wasilla, Knik Goose Bay, Fairview, Port MacKenzie, Palmer, and the Butte



Valley Transit's fixed route commuter service runs along Glenn Highway between the Mat-Su Valley and Anchorage. Many commuters rely on the service for access to employment, healthcare, and educational opportunities. Their commuter service helps to decrease congestion on the Glenn Highway during peak hours and is a critical lifeline for those individuals with zero car households.



VALLEY TRANSIT Mission: To provide accessible, sustainable, reliable, efficient and quality public transportation.

Valley Transit has been growing rapidly to stay in line with the rapid growth of the Mat-Su Valley. However, supply chain demands on bus vehicle production have vastly impacted transit agencies, and Valley Transit is no exception. The agency has been awaiting the arrival of new busses for their commuter service between the Valley and Anchorage that were slated to arrive fall of 2022; however, only some have arrived. Additionally, the agency has expressed a need to provide additional demand response services within the Borough, but do not have the resources (vehicles and drivers) to make more service work. The agency is in critical need for more funding for capital, more flexibility to plan for future needs, and for supply line issues to resolve quickly. Additionally, the Borough has some land use regulation and development challenges that currently prevent Valley Transit from expanding to fixed route services. For example, connectivity between major cities (Palmer and Wasilla), is not direct. Further, travel between major areas during the winter months presents challenges.

The table at right depicts the annual ridership data for Valley Transit for the last four years. While the system was impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, ridership has already been restored on the system's demand response routes. The commuter ridership numbers reflect the dire need for additional vehicles.

Valley Transit Ridership 2019-2022

FY 2019	62,839
Demand Response	11,383
Commuter	51,456
FY 2020	53,768
Demand Response	9,767
Commuter	44,001
FY 2021	29,187
Demand Response	9,599
Commuter	19,588
FY2022	31,183
Demand Response	10,772
Commuter	20,411

People Mover

People Mover is a division of the Municipality of Anchorage's Public Transportation Department (PTD) and is the largest public transit provider in the State of Alaska. Specifically in Anchorage Municipal area, People Mover provides the following:



- Commuter express transit services connecting City Hall and the Eagle River Transit Center via the Glenn Highway (on Route 92)
- Local bus service connecting:
 - Anchorage Senior Center to City Hall via Medfra Street, 9th Avenue, Hyder Street, & 13th Avenue (on Route 11)
 - City Hall to Anchorage Museum (on Route 41)
 - Dimond Transit Center and the Alaska Native Medical Center (on Route 55)
 - Dimond Transit Center and the Downtown Transit Center (on Route 35)
 - Downtown Transit Center and the Ted Stevens Anchorage International Airport via Spenard Road (on Route 40)
 - Downtown Transit Center with the Alaska Native Medical Center via 3rd & 4th Avenues, Northway Mall, East High School, and UMed (on Route 20)
 - Downtown Transit Center and Muldoon Transit Hub, and the Alaska Regional Hospital (on Route 30)
 - Downtown Transit Center with the V.A. Clinic and the Alaska Native Medical Center (on Route 25)
 - Muldoon to downtown Anchorage (via Northern Lights Blvd on Route 10)
 - Northway Mall, Muldoon Transit Hub, Centennial Village, and Creekside Center drive (on Route 31)
 - Between City Hall, the Anchorage Museum and the Dimond Transit Center via Old Seward Highway (on Route 85)
- [Local bus service circulator on Penland Parkway](#) at the Northway Mall looping to Mountain View Drive, Parsons Ave, Pine Street (on Route 21)
- [Circulator bus service](#) between the Dimond Transit Center and the Airport via Dimond Boulevard, Jewel Lake Road, and International Airport Road (on Route 65)
- [Limited stop commuter services](#) from Huffman/Oceanview from the Dimond Transit Center via Old Seward Highway (on Route 91)

Demand-Response Transit

Demand-Response transportation involves the request for a specified ride by an individual, household, or another unit (e.g., coworkers) making the same trip. These pickup and drop-off points are expected by the rider to be relatively more proximate to the front door of an origin and/or destination. The extent to which the ride is curb-to-curb, door-to-door, or door-through-door will typically be implied in the providers' regulations and determined by several factors.



Demand-response providers are more likely to be carrying the responsibilities of coordination and meeting human service needs. The added complexities of repeatedly fulfilling demand-response trips may contribute to a higher cost to operate compared to fixed-route transit. The cost of demand-response services—and the extent to which those costs are passed on to the rider—will vary depending on the situation.

Public and Non-Profit Demand Response Options

ADA Paratransit (“AnchorRIDES”)

One of the most known public demand-response options is paratransit, designed to meet a mandate set by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1991. ADA paratransit is intended to serve as an alternative for people who do not have the ability to safely access the fixed-route system (reasons could include deficiencies in the specific journey to a fixed-route stop or a condition experienced by the rider). As an alternative to fixed-route transit, ADA paratransit is required by law to exist within $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile of any local fixed-route and during the same hours of operation as the fixed-routes.



Riders of these services are subject to an evaluation process that determines their eligibility to ride ADA paratransit by verifying the rider is, per the ADA, either unable to access a bus stop and lift-equipped fixed-route bus by themselves and/or has a disability prohibiting the rider from independently completing the fixed-route bus.¹ The evaluation process may include a submitted application, professional medical verification, an interview, and an assessment.

AnchorRIDES is housed within the Municipality of Anchorage’s Public Transportation Department (PTD). AnchorRIDES provides shared rides, accessible door-to-door transportation within the urbanized area. PTD administers AnchorRIDES through the state’s coordinated paratransit system. AnchorRIDES operations, customer service and

¹ Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (Section 37.123 (3))

vehicle maintenance are provided through a contract with MV Transportation. PTD determines customer eligibility as well as oversight of MV Transportation.

Sunshine Transit

Sunshine Transit is a “rural” provider of demand response transit service in the Upper Susitna Valley. They strive to provide affordable reliable transit service that breaks down access barriers to healthcare, wellness, education, and employment. Sunshine Transit serves Talkeetna, Trapper Creek, Willow, Caswell, and Houston, and works to complement service provided by Valley Transit.



Sunshine operates one deviated route bus service as well as demand response bus service throughout the Upper Susitna Valley. A variety of target populations currently rely on service through Sunshine, including older adults, individuals with disabilities, and those with low incomes. Youth populations also rely on Sunshine Transit to connect to after school activities, including sports, library, and tutoring programs.

Like Valley Transit, supply-chain issues with buses remain a challenge for Sunshine. The provider reports that if the agency had additional vehicles and drivers, more service would certainly be provided in the Mat-Su Valley. The average annual ridership for Sunshine Transit is shown in the table at right.

Sunset Transit Ridership 2019-2022

FY 2018	14,030
FY 2019	16,093
FY 2020	14,825
FY 2021	12,190
FY2022	14,442

Native Village of Eklutna

In 1961, the Native Village of Eklutna (NVE) government office was organized to protect their land rights. At that time, the NVE had lost over 320,000 acres. In 1982, the tribe became federally recognized and was recorded under the Indian Tribal



Native Village of Eklutna
Tribal Government

Governmental Tax Status Act. The NVE Tribal Transportation Department provides multiple transportation services, including the implementation of the NVE Long Range Transportation Plan, sidewalk, and parking maintenance, and provides demand response ride services for the NVE Clinic, primarily for tribal elders and those members with disabilities. The NVE also implemented the Long Range Transportation Plan, and is responsible for clearing sidewalks, maintaining village parking areas, and providing demand response ride services for the NVE Clinic. The NVE values partnerships and currently has partnerships with the municipality of Anchorage for support services, including the Anchorage Police Department. The Village has encouraged memorandums of understanding with other potential partners in the Borough for the provision of transit and planning services that mutually benefit the Village and the Borough residents.

Chickaloon Village Transportation

The mission of the Chickaloon Village's Transportation Department is "to provide the safest, most efficient transportation infrastructure for the tribe, our citizens, and the public. This includes FHWA's mission of enhancing mobility through innovation, leadership, and public service."



The goals of the transportation department are as follows:

- Safety: Continually improve transportation safety.
- Mobility & Productivity: Preserve, improve, and expand the tribal highway transportation system while enhancing the operation of transportation systems and intermodal connectors.
- Global Connectivity: Promote and facilitate a more efficient tribal, domestic, and global transportation system that enables economic growth.
- Environment: Protect and enhance the natural environment and communities affected by transportation development.
- Organizational Excellence: Advance the tribal ability to manage for results and innovation.

The Village offers demand response transit service through the Chickaloon Area Transit System (CATs). CATs was established through an FTA formula program, and operates weekdays from MP 70 to MP 40 of the Glenn Highway. The CATs demand response system is accessible and available to all residents in the service area. CATs offers connections to Valley Transit in Palmer & Wasilla with connections to Anchorage. In 2018, the annual ridership for CATs was 2,500.

Human Services

Additional agencies in the Mat-Su provide limited transportation services, usually solely for their own programs and clientele. Human services may encompass a variety of audiences, including those specified for medical trips, for older adults, adult daycare, dialysis services, and the like.



Mat-Su Senior Services

Mat-Su Senior Services (MSSS) was established over 40 years ago and is the largest non-profit senior facility in the Mat-Su Valley. MSSS serves the largest geographical area for senior services and has been a Medicaid Waiver (CHOICE) Program provider for nearly 40 years. MSSS provides in-house demand response transportation services for older adults in the MSV.



To qualify for services, individuals must be a minimum of 60 years of age, an individual with a disability who lives with a senior who is 60 years of age or older, or an individual who is

	Total Individual Clients Served	Total Miles	Total Trips
2020	213	26,445	1,691
2021	132	25,225	1,443
2022	109	22,169	1,457

eligible for the HCBS Waiver Program or Medicaid. MSSS requests reservations to use their services, with a preference for a week’s notice for trip scheduling purposes. The number of clients served by MSSS is detailed in the table above.

Wasilla Area Seniors Inc.

Wasilla Area Seniors Inc. (WASI) provides transportation to and from the WASI senior center for congregate meals, Monday - Friday, enabling seniors access to social interaction and a nutritious lunch. Rides are provided by trained drivers, and services are no cost to seniors 60 and older.



Private

Taxicabs

Companies offering up taxis serve emergency, community, intercity, and charter needs based on demand. They include Grizzly Cab, Alaska Cab Valley, Weefjuk Taxi, and Big Lake Cab companies. Not all private services are equipped to provide ADA-accessible vehicles and meet riders with all special needs; one should inquire prior to booking a ride or reach out to dedicated entities specializing in such needs (such as Mobility Transportation and Services).



While local taxi companies have created apps and other forms of electronic bookings (beyond the traditional phone and street side hailing), taxi industries are in close competition with transportation network companies (TNCs) that exclusively rely on mobile online apps to match drivers with people in search of a private ride.

Ridehailing & Transportation Network Companies (TNCs)

The act of using a TNC to complete part of a person’s trip using electronic documentation and payment is known in this report as ridehailing. Vehicles used for ridehailing—which may or may not be wheelchair accessible—may shuttle private individuals, private groups, and carpools of people taking separate trips. Ridehailing trips are known to contribute to traffic congestion and other negative externalities.



These services can also pose technological and financial barriers for people with older smartphones, limited data plans, or if they are unbanked/underbanked. Currently there is no registered Uber or Lyft service in the Mat-Su Valley except for Disco Dave’s

which has referral codes for both Uber and Lyft. Disco Dave's is a private provider that offers taxis, bus rentals, and airport shuttle services.

A variation to the ridehailing service is a ride hailing concierge service such as GoGoGrandparent. GoGoGrandparent turns on-demand transportation companies like Lyft and Uber into services that help families take better care of older adults—without using a smart phone. They can get a ride whenever they want in less than 15 minutes. GoGoGrandparent is offered in all 50 states and can be found in Anchorage. GoGoGrandparent is not currently operating in the Mat-Su Borough.



Non-Emergency Medical Transportation

A subset of private demand-response transportation is known as non-emergency medical transportation (NEMT), used for transportation to publicly funded healthcare under the Alaska Medicaid Coordinated Care Initiative (AMCCI). Typically, NEMT is intended for Medicaid clients who have no other means of getting to and from medical appointments. The State, by extension responsible for NEMT, currently offers an information guide of Transportation Resources under the Alaska Medicaid Member page online. Currently there are no private nor non-profit providers of NEMT in the Mat-Su Valley; these services are provided by the local emergency medical service provider, highlighted in the next paragraph.



Emergency Medical Transportation

Emergency transportation takes multiple forms. Typically priced at an unaffordable cost, the personal choice of ambulance transportation is essential in times of life or death; however, given the limited (or no) non-emergency medical transportation options in the MSV, the EMS is often overwhelmed with “repeat offender” calls to request emergency medical transportation services to non-emergency appointments. In addition, the limitations COVID put on individuals and providers to attend preventative care appointments only increased the need for emergency transport services. First responders may be asked to determine ride destinations in coordination with law enforcement and/or social services for the safety and protection of victims.



People with emergency and non-emergency needs may occasionally take air transportation:

- LifeMed Alaska
- Medevac Alaska

It was noted by a few stakeholders that these services are sometimes a necessity for tourists to the Mat-Su region who are older adults. Many tourists overestimate their abilities (hiking and other outdoor activities) and require emergency medical transport into Anchorage when on vacation.

Other Transit

Some transit is designed for the exclusive use of a group, such as employees accessing a specific location, residents from a complex taking a shuttle, and students in need of a safe passage to their dorm or parking space. In other words, these services are exclusive because they serve a specific population and place and are not available to the general public (even if willing to pay). Examples of these include:



- Employee shuttle
- Elder care
- Veterans Affairs services

It is challenging to track every possible service available and there is reluctance to share resources due to liability concerns. However, these services, which will require the involvement of a vehicle fleet and trained operators, carry the potential to serve as a locally based resource and partner in coordination.

RideShare (Carpool & Vanpool Service)

The Carpool/Vanpool Program provides groups of five or more riders the opportunity to “pool” rides together to places of employment. In Anchorage, free carpool matching services are provided through a contract with Commute with Enterprise. There are currently no ridesharing services readily available in the Mat-Su Valley. Given the growth the area has experienced, however, ride sharing may be a viable option to add to the family of services in the Valley.



Other Transportation Services

There are also services which do not directly provide transportation but are vital resources in helping people affordably and knowledgeably complete their trips.

Mat-Su Borough, Metropolitan Planning Organization(s) and Committees

Municipalities (the cities of Palmer, Houston, Wasilla) are responsible for the application of land use laws and policies affecting the design of locally owned streets, which have a bearing on how people use the transportation system. Each municipality has their own land use planning authority and conducts independent planning and zoning. However, despite the Mat-Su Borough owning the vast majority of the roads and being the sole planning organization for the Region, the transportation system suffers, being limited by various city codes. The Mat-Su Borough does not have robust land use regulations that would guide development and support transit planning and development. Unfortunately, the region has not been investing in infrastructure like bus stops, park and rides, mobility hubs, and pedestrian facilities that would support transit. Additionally, current land use regulations within the Borough hinder development and planning for adequate transit infrastructure needed for a rapidly growing region.



A community where the placement of buildings and permitted uses containing essential needs—all within a safe walkable distance of people’s homes, workplaces, and schools—can be pre-determined with a solid land use plan which aspires to a future of universally accessible multimodal transportation options for the entire population. The complementary attributes of complete streets and/or layered networks designed for the safe and comfortable enjoyment of people who walk, ride bicycles, and use their personal mobility devices (just as much as people who drive automobiles for personal and commercial reasons) can also encourage more people to use transit. Committees, such as those formed to support planning efforts, and standing committees like the Public Transit Advisory Board (PTAB) in Anchorage, help provide a public voice and feedback to planning efforts. The Borough currently has a Transportation Advisory Board (TAB); however, efforts must be made to consistently plan for future transportation needs in the Mat-Su Valley. The ongoing development of the Metropolitan Planning Organization may be able to strengthen the connection between land use planning and the opportunity to build a more robust transit system for the community.

Travel Training

A major support for people to ride transit is the act of education. Riders—including those from vulnerable populations—benefit from travel training to understand available transportation options in their communities, along with how to use such services. There are currently no travel training programs in the Mat-Su Borough, but there are good lessons to be learned from the programming in Anchorage. These trainings are provided by People Mover, who employs one full-time travel trainer. The goal of the Travel Training program is to empower individuals to travel independently using the People Mover system. Travel training is free for all individuals. The travel training program offers individual and group travel training through a “train the trainer” system, with presentations for staff training, organization meetings, workshops, and materials for caregivers. Customers may also receive travel training as individuals or in a group on how to use the People Mover system.



Figure 2-18 People Mover Travel Training



Driver Training

Although professional drivers are expected to obtain the appropriate licenses, there may be additional training which can help drivers—both professional and volunteer—be more responsive and sensitive to the needs of older adults and people with disabilities. Safety training (including passenger assistance methods, disability awareness, and defensive driving) can be provided through national and state conferences. In many cases (depending on the employer), driver trainings are required. More on driver training opportunities will be discussed in the strategy section of this plan.



Centralized Dispatch Pilot Project

This project is a high priority “implementation project” from the region’s 2018 Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan, which was led by the MSB and the Mat-Su Health Foundation. The project will implement a centralized mobility management system in a single, online platform to coordinate the scheduling, dispatch, call-taking, fleet management, and payment functions for multiple transit and human services transportation providers in a large rural area (covering 25,000 square miles), where traditional transit service is largely cost-prohibitive. This one-call/one-click system may assign trips to the lowest-cost eligible provider and provide riders with flexible request and payment options to improve the rider’s Complete Trip experience.



Bike and Transit Programs

Bike and transit programs specifically target first- and last-mile issues to using transit in order to provide a cost-effective means of personal transportation and can be especially important and effective for low-income residents.

The Mat-Su Borough is in the process of wrapping up a borough-wide Bike and Pedestrian Plan (BPP) that will increase safety and connectivity. The BPP purpose is to develop priorities for bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure to support access and healthy lifestyles. The BPP will identify connections between urban and rural areas and recreational opportunities. Ultimately, the BPP will offer connections throughout the Borough so that individuals may bike from their homes to downtown Wasilla or a nearby park-and-ride to catch a commuter bus.



Youth Transportation

Youth transportation encompasses transportation to meet the following needs for youth (typically minors, or people under the age of 18, but variable depending on special needs and academic trajectories):



- School buses and transportation programs for youth
- Connections to after-school, vocational, and remedial programs for youth
- Arrangements for carpooling to and from school among families (“schoolpools”)
- Transportation for youth transitioning to adulthood that are currently placed in unhoused programming (i.e., My House)

In the Mat-Su Valley, some youth transportation services are currently being provided through contract with local providers. Valley Transit currently works with the school district to provide some rides to schools, and Sunshine Transit works to provide services for students to after-school activities; however, both providers discussed the financial sustainability of the services and need for more funding to be able to continue to provide them.

Transportation Needs Assessment

This section presents an overview of transportation needs and gaps in the Mat-Su Valley for the target population groups—older adults, youth, individuals with disabilities, individuals living in poverty, veterans, and limited-English speakers. The overview draws from four inputs:



- **Demographic Analysis:** The project team analyzed demographic characteristics and mobility and access conditions, as well as available transportation services.
- **Plan Review:** Early in the development of the Coordinated Plan, the project team collected transportation and infrastructure plans conducted in the Mat-Su Valley and the Anchorage Municipal area. These plans were reviewed for goals, common themes, and relevant implementation projects.
- **Stakeholder Interviews:** The project team conducted 17 stakeholder interviews between June and August 2022. Stakeholders included transit providers, human service organizations, and local, regional, and state organizations.
- **Service Inventory:** An inventory of current services was also compiled during the course of the stakeholder interviews. The service inventory describes the type of services currently available to the region.

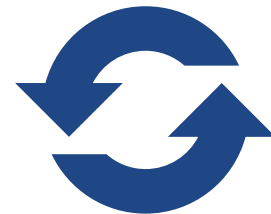
Five themes emerged in our assessment of needs and gaps:

1. Coordination and collaboration
2. Access to key destinations
3. Regional transportation needs
4. Education and awareness
5. Funding

These themes will help to inform the goals, recommendations, and strategies, as well as the prioritization of projects and programs discussed in future chapters and the implementation plan.

1. Coordination and Collaboration

More coordination and collaboration came up as a need among several stakeholders. Many expressed major concerns about the lack of coordination between agencies. Most could point to some level of coordination with other organizations and providers. For example, some stakeholders coordinate on service functions, such as making transfers easier or otherwise more seamless. However, this type of coordination is rare, and areawide coordination is not widespread.



Gaps in transportation service were a common theme. In particular, an identified need for some type of transit (fixed-route service) were identified as a need, particularly between Wasilla and Palmer. Stakeholders noted that many marginalized populations, including people with low incomes, reside in gaps between demand response and ADA paratransit service areas.

Stakeholders noted that it was difficult to increase available services because many agencies have issues with staffing resources, education, outreach, and service costs. Staff time and capacity were the primary concerns for all organizations and other stakeholders. For example, many agencies noted challenges with operator retention and overall driver shortages, from transit providers to school district transportation departments. Many organizations have as few as one or two staff members dedicated to operations, and sometimes even maintenance activities.

2. Access to Key Destinations

Providing transportation services for veterans and tribal elders for needed services, such as medical appointments, was a notable concern among several stakeholders. The regionalization of veterans' services means that each entity has their own ways, processes, and schedules, making coordination more difficult when changes occur. The rural nature of tribal lands means that accessing would-be client homes becomes a major issue in the winter, especially when roads are not being cleared regularly.



Access to healthcare is a major need for the region. Stakeholders expressed the need for transportation to provide more predictable access to healthcare appointments, such as dialysis and other critical services. In the 2018 Coordinated Plan, this was a significant topic of discussion and remains a challenge for the region.

Better transportation to employment is a common need among stakeholders. Large employers lack sufficient transportation options for those without access to vehicles. In addition, there is a significant need for stronger connections between population centers; from Wasilla to Palmer, from the Mat-Su Valley to Anchorage, etc. Many people commute between the larger population areas for employment, but in the winter, those commutes become challenging and even dangerous. Should an accident occur on Glenn Highway, for example, the road would be shut down until it is safely cleared.

3. Regional Transportation Needs

The service needs of urban and rural areas are vastly different. Unfortunately, these differences can be geographically complex due to service boundaries, municipal boundaries, tribal nation boundaries, and funding designations for place types.



Rapid growth can make it hard for transportation services to meet increasing demand. This can have implications on opportunities for federal funding. The Mat-Su Valley grew significantly since the last coordinated plan, and the pandemic only increased the growth in the Valley, as a number of families nationally relocated from urban areas to more “rural” and suburban areas.

Some agencies noted geographic barriers to service such as rail lines and rivers that can cut off major routes and cause major transportation disruptions and increase unreliability. In the case of the Mat-Su Valley, the singular highway connecting the Valley to Anchorage can create challenges, as can two-lane roads connecting destinations within the Valley. Additionally, a number of providers noted challenges with more rural roads that are unpaved and/or unplowed in the winter months.

Stakeholders noted specific gaps in service, including more rural areas throughout the Valley, particularly on Tribal lands, where residents do not have comparable access to public transit. This reflects the need to provide more cost-effective transportation options to areas that do not meet the density required for fixed-route transit. Additionally, the pure size of the Mat-Su Valley is a gap for service. Many providers noted the inability to serve all areas that are requested in a given day due to long headways from point-to-point.

Stakeholders mentioned the need for a seamless regional transit system that is efficient, affordable, dependable, and safe. In areas where fixed-route transit is not feasible, stakeholders brought up the creation of park-and-ride lots as a possible solution, particularly in areas between the Valley and Anchorage. However, there was

emphasis on ensuring individuals could also easily access these lots, not just by single occupancy vehicle, but by active transportation modes such as biking and walking. There is a significant concern regarding limited or no sidewalk access, particularly in the winter months.

4. Education and Awareness

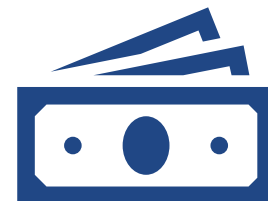
An additional concern among stakeholders was ensuring representation by target populations in feedback-gathering community engagement activities. Some agencies simply lack the resources to collect a wider, more representative sample of community feedback. In addition, there were concerns with gathering representative feedback from Tribal representatives.



Better mechanisms for disseminating information are also necessary. One stakeholder shared an example of organizations being unaware of FTA Section 5310 funding, which highlights the need to provide educational opportunities to new or existing service providers. Additionally, entities could benefit from better understanding funding options available for transit provision, in light of changes resulting from the decennial census.

5. Funding

Stakeholders noted that the lack of funding hinders their ability to provide needed services for their communities. However, while funding is an issue across the region, the specific needs vary considerably between organizations. Many need additional funds to purchase new vehicles as they age beyond their useful life, while others are looking to hire, retain drivers, and expand their service. Most agencies have all the needed funding for operations; however, all noted a need for more funding for capital projects.



Rural agencies have unique funding needs. Organizations in rural towns with smaller service areas face an issue where their vehicles age but do not reach the miles needed to upgrade to new vehicles. By contrast, rural organizations that serve large areas have vehicles that are driven over exceptionally long distances. They voiced concern over the way their revenue miles are calculated, stating that funding sources do not cover the extremely long deadhead miles that accrue when returning from these trips.



Chapter 3.

Review of Existing Plans, Studies, and Reports

This chapter summarizes the overarching goals identified in existing plans and policies influencing transit service funding and transit development throughout Alaska, with a focus on the Matanuska-Susitna Valley. The project team reviewed a diverse cross-section of documents that guide transportation and transit planning. Key findings from this analysis are shown on the following page.

The remainder of the chapter includes the following:

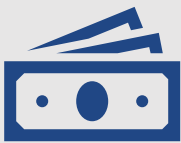
- A summary of the goals and needs (where applicable) across these plans and their relation to transit.
- Recognition of the constraints to transit access and implementation facing the Mat-Su Valley (MSV).
- A summary of transit-supportive strategies at the regional and state levels.
- Needs, gaps, and barriers related to transit access, service provision, and coordination.

KEY FINDINGS



Public transit does not adequately serve rural populations.

Low densities, large service areas, and extensive distances between activity centers complicate the delivery of public transit in rural areas of the Mat-Su Valley. Poor connectivity to regional systems makes it difficult for residents to get their basic needs (e.g., medical care, education, shopping, and recreation) met. Opportunities exist to improve connections between inter- and intra-city passenger travel via improved intermodal connections.



Funding remains a key barrier for transportation improvements.

There is limited dedicated funding in place to support the transit improvements needed to address the demands of a growing population experiencing demographic changes. Key funding sources are restrictive; they can only be applied to services for specific populations and for specific purposes. As a result, under-capacity vehicles from different providers may travel the same route at the same time but are barred from picking up additional riders.



There is a desire to improve coordination of transportation services between transit and human service providers.

Due to limited availability of federal and state funding, it is in the best interest of transit and human service providers to coordinate transit programs and services to make the most efficient use of existing resources and to avoid duplicative efforts. The statewide long-range plan and policy references the desire to coordinate at broader scopes, stating that there is “higher demand for specialized transportation such as human service transportation, public transit, and other alternatives in various regions”. However, the next step is to encourage coordination at both the Borough and regional levels; meaning coordination should be improved within the Borough and between the Borough and the greater Anchorage Metropolitan Area, particularly for commuter populations from both areas.



Lack of support to implement transportation solutions.

Several plans have been developed over the years with solutions to regional needs and growth, but limited recommendations have been implemented. There are a variety of reasons as to why transportation options have yet to be implemented, but it appears that lack of cooperation and/or political will is “hamstringing” the process. Additionally, the Anchorage MSA and Mat-Su Valley region struggles with public trust issues in local government, meaning that even if a plan were to go out for vote, the support for implementation may not exist.

STATE PLANS

Alaska Statewide Long-Range Transportation Plan, Let's Keep Moving 2036 (2016)

Let's Keep Moving, the Statewide Long-Range Transportation Plan, establishes transportation policies, goals, and implementing actions for the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOT&PF) through 2036. The purpose of the plan is to set policy and investment priorities. In addition, it updates the 2030 long-range plan, "Let's Get Moving 2030", published in 2008. The 2036 Plan Vision is "to provide a transportation system that enables a robust and growing economy and meets the mobility needs of the State's residents."

The vision, including an assessment of opportunities and risks to the vision, help to shape the development of policies and implementation activities to help guide investments through the management of a statewide transportation system. Additionally, the long-range plan has multiple goals, including:

1. Manage the Alaska Transportation System using a performance-based measurement approach for federally funded surface transportation assets (based on federally required performance measures, focusing on safety, congestion and the condition of pavements and bridges).
2. Prioritize investments in system preservation, modernization, and new construction based on their impact on our transportation system performance goals and cost effectiveness.
3. Proactively monitor trends and manage risks to transportation system performance
4. Monitor economic development activities and projects so that the resulting demands for transportation infrastructure investments can be addressed
5. Address increases in travel demand in urban areas through MPO, corridor and area plans
6. Improve transportation system resiliency and add redundancy to address safety and security risks
7. Manage and operate the system to improve operational efficiency and reduce safety risk
8. Incorporate livability, community, and environmental concerns in our decisions



9. Provide transparency for the allocation of scarce resources and accountability for the performance of the transportation system through performance measurement and reporting

Of note, the Alaska Long Range Transportation Plan will be implemented through the development of transportation and multi-modal plans throughout the state, outlined as follows:

- Area, Corridor and Modal Plans
- MPO Plans
- Transportation Asset Management Planning
- Plan Actions
- Performance Management
- Development of the CIP and STIP

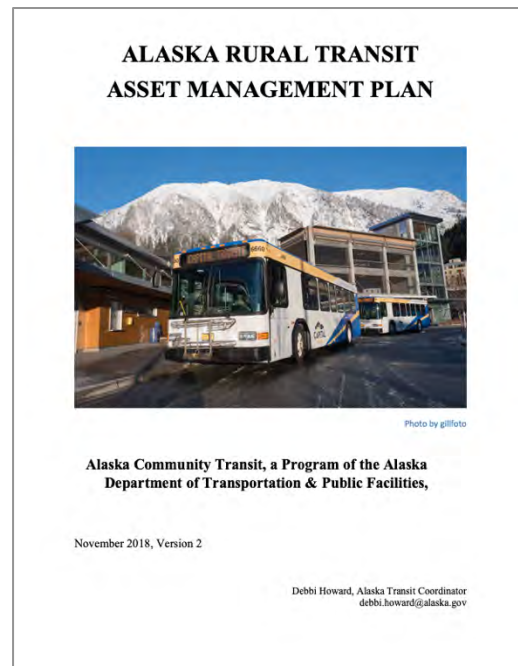
Alaska Rural Transit Asset Management (TAM) Plan (2018)

As a direct recipient of Federal Transit Administration (FTA) funding, the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (ADOT&PF) Transit Programs Division developed this Rural Transit Asset Management Plan (TAM) to document the statewide approach to transit asset management. The TAM Plan seeks to provide guidance to Alaska's rural transit providers as they operate and maintain their capital assets to ensure reliable and safe service delivery for transit riders across the state. Additionally, the TAM is heavily focused on State of Good Repair (SGR) and providing support to rural providers to help maintain SGR for all vehicles.

The mission statement of ADOT&PF is

"To support the DOT&PF mission by providing access and mobility within the communities of Alaska, both urban and non-urban, through transit services that are safe, appealing, efficient, and easily-available to both the general public and transit-dependent populations."

The TAM plan sets out two main goals, coupled with objectives and metrics for statewide asset management. The goals of the TAM are:



- Goal 1: Reduce the number of vehicles that have passed their ULB life by 3% annually. - Prioritize the replacement of vehicles that have passed their ULB.
- Goal 2: Reduce the number of vehicles not in SGR by 3% by 2020. - Dispose of vehicles that pose an irreparable unacceptable safety risk or provide the necessary repairs and/or refurbishment to place the vehicles back in SGR status.

The Economic Value of Public Transit in Alaska (2022)

This study highlights the economic value of public transit in Alaska and includes the providers that receive grant funding from the Alaska Community Transit Office, which includes Valley Transit and Sunshine Transit in the Mat-Su Borough. The report covers the many benefits of public transit covered through the following themes and their respective key findings:

Statewide Economic Impacts of Transit Expenditures

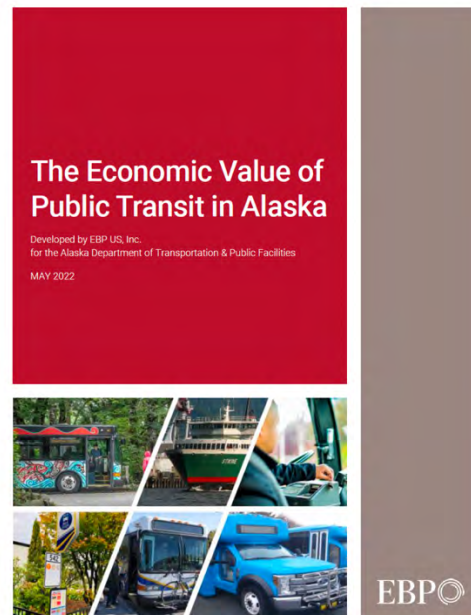
- 831 Jobs
- \$113.9 Million in Annual Sales (supported by transit agency expenditures)
- \$1.9 in business sales for every dollar spent on transit

Transit Commuters and the Alaskan Economy

- 5,645 employees use transit to get to work
- \$203M in annual wages brought home by transit commuters
- \$941M in annual sales facilitated by transit commuters 2% transit commuter share statewide

Transit's Role in Providing Inclusive Mobility

- 28% of Alaska transit commuters live in zero-car households
- \$24,826 median income of Alaska transit commuters
- 52% of Alaska transit commuters identify as non-white
- 24% of Alaska transit trips are by young people under the age of 16
- 34% of Alaska transit trips are by older adults 60+ years of age



Performance Benefits of Transit

- 1M trips enabled by Alaska transit agencies that would not be possible otherwise
- \$117M in annual benefits from Alaska transit compared to \$56M in average annual costs

Transit Agency Highlights

- The transit agency highlights for both Valley Transit and Sunshine Transit will be covered in the providers section of this report.

In summary, transit agencies in Alaska provide \$117 million annually in benefits to riders, visitors, and broader circles. The benefits include the system users, local communities, and those trips for individuals who would be unable to travel otherwise. Cumulatively, the benefits significantly outweigh the costs for providing transit throughout the state of Alaska.

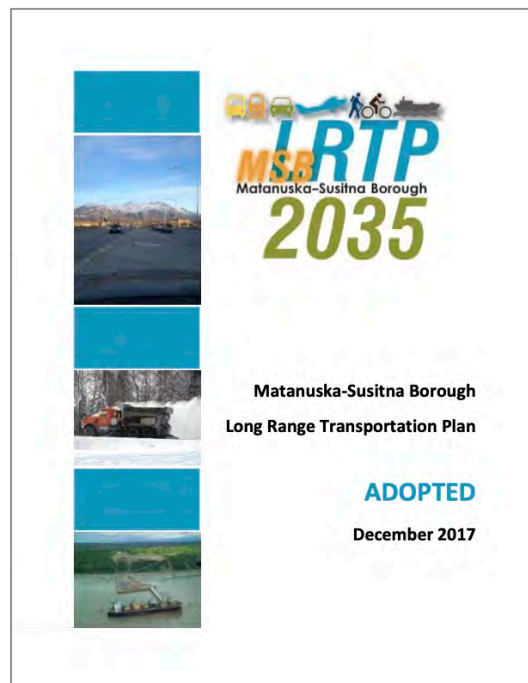
REGIONAL PLANS

Matanuska-Susitna Borough Long Range Transportation Plan 2035 (2017)

The Matanuska-Susitna Borough (MSB) worked to develop a Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) in conjunction with ADOT&PF to help guide transportation solutions, improvements, funding decisions, and policy development by the MSB and the State of Alaska both in the near and long term through 2035.

The LRTP is multi-pronged; the purposes of the plan outlined as follows:

- Establish community goals for the MSB transportation system;
- Plan and recommend strategies for all modes of travel, including personal automobiles, bus/transit, bicycles, pedestrians, freight, rail, marine, and aviation;
- Develop and analyze a range of improvements that address identified mobility, safety, and accessibility needs;
- Develop a prioritized, fiscally constrained list of roadway improvements to be completed through 2035; and
- Develop a short-term implementation strategy



The MSB developed seven goals through input received from public workshops and meetings, as well as input from and research by the LRTP project team. Goals were developed for the future of community transportation in the Valley.

- Goal One: Improve Transportation and Land Use Connection
- Goal Two: Provide Transportation Choices
- Goal Three: Improve Connectivity
- Goal Four: Improve Mobility
- Goal Five: Make Transportation Safer
- Goal Six: Support Economic Vitality
- Goal Seven: Enhance Environmental Quality

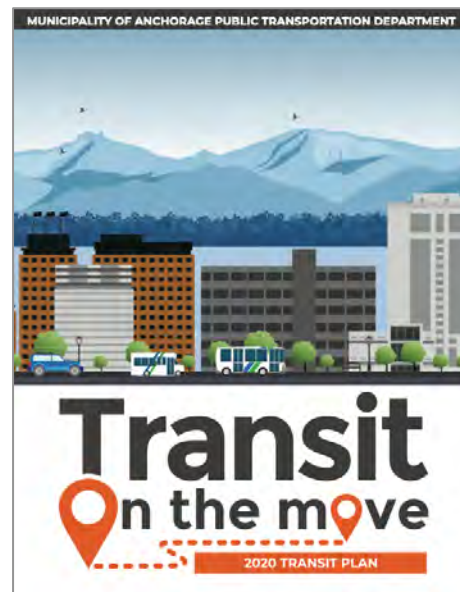
The MSB's LRTP also addresses regional coordination. There was a proposal created for the establishment of a Regional Transportation Planning Organization (RTPO). An RTPO is a group of non-metropolitan local officials and transportation system operators that a state may assemble to assist in statewide and non-metropolitan transportation planning.

Additionally, the LRTP examined a formal Transportation Partnership amongst regional stakeholders to help address areas of coordination with other transportation stakeholder agencies and government structures within the MSB (DOT&PF, the cities, ADEC). The plan recommended continuing efforts to improve coordination, efficiency, and knowledge-sharing between all transportation decision-makers.

Transit on the Move (2020), Municipality of Anchorage

In the Fall of 2019, Anchorage's Public Transportation Department (PTD) began an overhaul of the People Mover bus system. As a direct result of the changes, ridership began growing after a decade of steady decline. The main changes involved service expansion into areas outside of the city core and providing more frequent service to densely populated (high ridership) areas. With any change, however, gaps still exist. The plan will continue improve the system, especially considering service changes related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Transit on the Move plan includes a mission statement and identifies goals and objectives for PTD to work toward and identifies performance measures and targets to track progress. The plan creates a list of priority



projects to improve the transit system, which are queued up and ready for implementation as additional funding is made available.

The mission statement of the PTD is:

Connect the community with safe, reliable transportation options, emphasizing customer service while providing economic, social and environmental benefits.

The following needs, gaps, and barriers were also identified through an extensive public engagement process:

- Concerns with planning, including route alignments, bus stops, frequency, span of service, and transit amenities.
- Comments related to reliability, including schedules, timeliness, and safety.

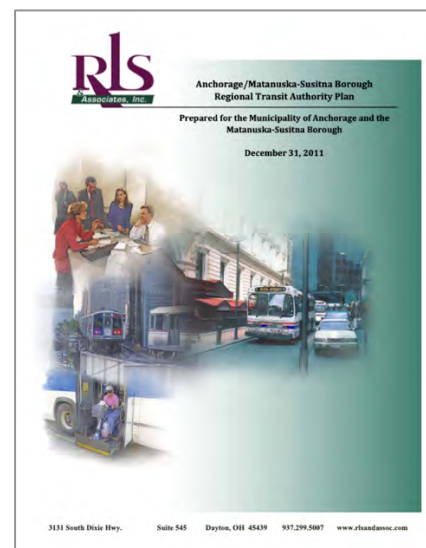
Plan goals and objectives include:

Goal	Objectives
Accessibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase access to jobs / residents • Increase seasonal accessibility of bus stops • Evaluate the cost of public transit • Increase our reach
Convenience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decrease wait time • Expand service • Travel time • Increase amenities at bus stops
Reliability & Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase vanpool participants • Improve on-time performance • Decrease number of missed trips • Improve security at bus stops & on buses

Anchorage / Matanuska-Susitna Borough Regional Transit Authority Plan (2011)

This plan, conducted in partnership with the Municipality of Anchorage and the Mat-Su Borough focused on the development of a Regional Transit Authority (RTA) to better plan and coordinate for public transit services. The plan discussed the feasibility of establishing an RTA, including a guide for the management and organizational structure for regional public transportation services in Southcentral Alaska. The plan is relatively focused, and comprised of four main tasks:

- A review of regional transit management and governance;
- An analysis of regional transit service and operations;

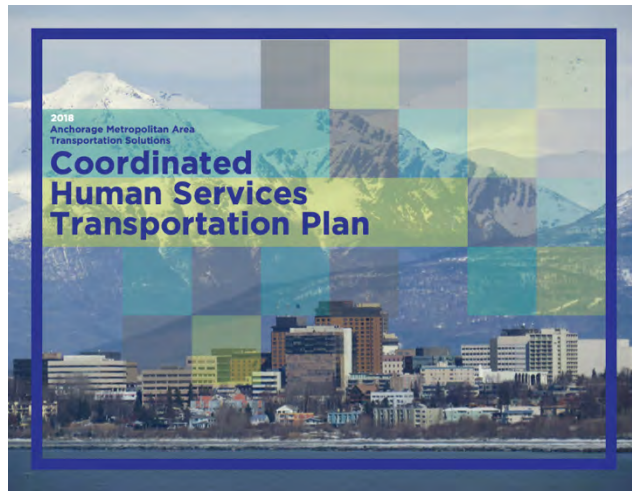


- An analysis of regional transit costs and funding; and
- The creation of a Regional Transit Authority Plan and recommendations.

The RTA plan included an overview of existing public transportation services, the recommended organizational structure of a Southcentral Alaska RTA, descriptions of potential RTA-provided transit services, a financial plan and an implementation plan.

Anchorage Metropolitan Area Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan (2018)

The Anchorage Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan (CHSTP) serves to improve transportation for transportation-disadvantaged populations in the Anchorage Bowl and Chugiak-Eagle River region by identifying the transportation needs of seniors, individuals with disabilities and people with low incomes. The plan included recommended strategies and actions for meeting these needs, as well as implementation. This Coordinated Plan covers fiscal years 2019-2023 and is an update to the 2009 Human Services Transportation Coordination Plan.



The Anchorage MSA Coordinated plan included a detailed needs assessment, summarized below:

- Study /address unintentional access issues created by PeopleMover redesign
- Provide more transportation options during late, weekend, and holiday hours
- Fortify/strengthen Anchorage's transportation systems throughout the winter
- Connect key players to better collaborate around human services transportation
- Address funding limitations and barriers
- Provide transportation information in more languages and non-web formats

There are three focus areas that came out of the coordinated plan associated with needs. These three areas are what the region will focus on for the next 5-year horizon:

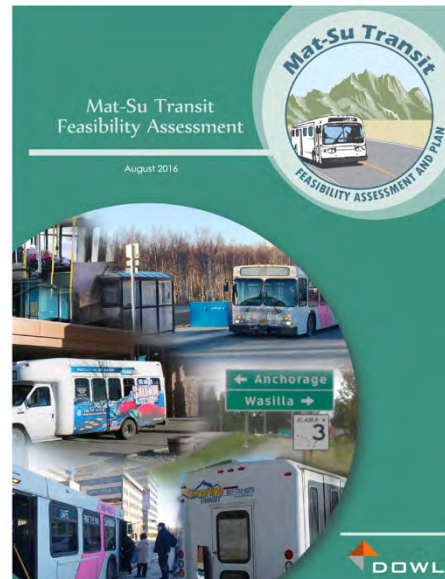
1. Working together as a community
2. Planning and building and inclusive transportation network
3. Growing and sharing funding for human services transportation

A Vision of Mobility: Practical Public Transit for the Matanuska Valley (2016)

This highly technical research report was written somewhat subjectively related to the need for transit in the Mat-Su Valley. The report discusses how not making the investment in public transit actually costs regions, and how efficient and effective planning could potentially support the needs in the Valley. The appendices go into a great deal of detail related to planning for the Valley, including a discussion of basic system design, expansion, how to organize and govern service, and whether a transit authority is appropriate. The report is a little dated, as it refers to SAFETEA-LU and MASCOT throughout. There are no clear goals in the report, no are there real costs associated with the proposals being made.

Mat-Su Transit Feasibility Assessment and Plan (2016)

The Mat-Su Transit Feasibility Assessment consists of a detailed evaluation of existing and future transit services to identify and recommend potential restructuring of the current system. The purpose of the plan is to make recommendations to improve the current system and to simplify governance and funding. The report, like others is somewhat dated as it makes references to MASCOT, though does discuss planned consolidation of MASCOT and Valley Mover. The report details population growth and demographics, noting significant increases in older adult populations, followed by a growing youth population. Of note in this plan is a reference to coordination between the providers and ADOT&PF in order to provide bus stops on DOT owned roads. This continues to be a challenge in the Mat-Su Borough. Another important section to note is the Transit Governance Models discussion. This report clearly identified the challenges and opportunities with non-profit models versus public agency models. This topic should be resumed in the Mat-Su Borough related to service provision and planning for the rapidly growing region. Given the growth, it may be time to consider a public agency model to meet local needs.



HUMAN SERVICE POLICIES AND PLANS

Mat-Su Regional Plan for Delivery of Senior Services (2011)

The Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority, Denali Commission, Mat-Su Health Foundation (MSHF), Rasmuson Foundation and United Way of Mat-Su share a concern for the senior citizens of Alaska. The rate of population growth among the 65 and older demographic in Alaska is one of the highest in the nation and has not slowed down since the creation of this plan. The increase in senior citizens is putting a strain on the senior services delivery system, particularly in the MSB. To better understand the needs of Mat-Su's senior population and to match those needs with an efficient and productive delivery system that can be implemented on a regional level, this plan was developed for delivery of senior services in the Mat-Su.



The study included a demographic analysis of seniors and an assessment of senior services infrastructure, such as senior centers, senior housing, home and community-based services, senior transportation, and skilled nursing care. The plan itself is over 10 years old, so there have been some changes to the infrastructure, especially since the pandemic. In addition to documenting senior services, the plan includes a demand analysis for senior services and analyzed the current gap in services and into the future. Through the research, four overarching regional strategies were developed for the Mat-Su and were analyzed for their financial feasibility. These strategies were shaped in the form of challenges. The challenges for service delivery in the Mat-Su are:

- Lack of service coordination among providers.
- The geography offers substantial challenges to service delivery.
- State governmental infrastructure is inefficient in identifying and qualifying seniors for service
- Current service provisions are not sufficient to support future demand

At the time of publication, the range of services offered in the Mat-Su is fairly broad, and there were likely sufficient service offerings to support the population in the short-term - especially for information and referral, care coordination and case management, home health, hospice, and adult day services. The study found, however, that there was considerable duplication of service among different

providers. Lack of service coordination or an over-arching coordinating element must evolve in the Mat-Su to support seniors in the future.

The analysis conducted, in combination with anecdotal observations offered by service providers and stakeholders both in and outside the MSB, point to several areas of concern in the current infrastructure. It was recommended that the areas of concern be addressed in a regional plan that maximizes service to seniors in cost- effective and efficient manner.

These areas included:

- Unnecessary and cost-ineffective duplication of service
- Lack of sufficient service offerings to support seniors with dementia, cognitive impairment or Alzheimer’s disease and related disorders
- Insufficient coordinated transportation services
- Absence of institutional long-term care or skilled nursing beds
- No formal program to manage chronic illness and support independence
- Limited-service provision outside borough “urban” centers

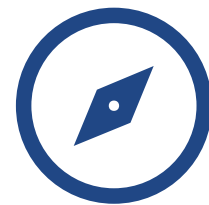
The study noted that the infrastructure gap analysis was based on the opinions of area providers, stakeholders, and observations from the study team. The plan ultimately recommends a thorough needs assessment effort to identify other areas of opportunity.



Chapter 4. Stakeholder Engagement Summary

Stakeholder Interview Summary

As part of the MSB Coordinated Plan's stakeholder outreach and engagement process, the Socius Amica team conducted a series of stakeholder interviews between the months of July and August of 2022. Stakeholders interviewed for this task included transit providers, human service organizations, and local, regional, and state agencies and organizations. The purpose of the stakeholder interviews was to:



- Understand the roles, perspectives, and vision of key transportation-related agencies and organizations in the study area
- Identify transit and mobility needs and gaps, including those related to transportation services as well as structural needs, such as organization, management, and resources.
- Identify the key concerns, issues, and gaps related to the transportation and mobility situations of the priority populations across the varied geographic, geopolitical, and transportation-services contexts of the regional study area.
- Document the immediate and ongoing impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

At the onset of each interview, the project team encouraged stakeholders to speak freely and assured them that any comments or ideas expressed would be anonymous. Thus, findings presented are not attributed to any individual or organization. The key takeaways are organized by the following topics:

- Coordination (within the Mat-Su Valley and with other municipalities)
- COVID-19 Pandemic Impacts
- Service Needs and Gaps Planning needs
- Priority Populations
- Funding
- Need for more Resources

Participating Stakeholders

In total, 20 “Tier 1” stakeholder agencies were selected to participate in the initial interview process. Stakeholders for the coordinated plan were categorized into three different categories: Tier 1, Tier 2, and Tier 3. Tier 1 stakeholders are those being asked to participate in the project advisory committee and in the interview process, whereas Tier 2 and 3 stakeholders will participate in larger group meetings and during the public comment period of the project. The table below outlines the agencies that were interviewed as a part of the initial engagement for the coordinated plan.



Stakeholder Type	Organization Name
Public Transit Provider	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Valley Transit • Sunshine Transit • AnchorRides
Tribal Nation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chickaloon Area Transportation Service (CATS) • Native Village of Eklutna • Knik Tribal Council
State Agency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alaska Department of Transportation
Human Service Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mat-Su Senior Services • My House • Mat-Su Coalition on Housing and Homelessness • Identity, Inc. • Valley Charities • Link Alaska
Health Agency(ies)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mat-Su Health Foundation • MSB Emergency Management Services • Chickaloon Life House Clinic Community Health Center
Education Entities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mat-Su Borough School District
Planning Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mat-Su Borough • Anchorage MPO (AMATS)

Coordination

Most, but not all, stakeholders identified at least some level of coordination with other organizations or providers, but instances of larger-scale area-wide coordination are rare. The most notable instances of large-scale coordination identified by stakeholders are the Central Dispatch implementation project, and some general efforts to connect service at park and rides or stops, but service connections are limited. Despite this, several stakeholders expressed major concerns about the lack of coordination, while openly noting their own lack of coordination with



other agencies. Some even expressed that they do not really coordinate with anyone and expressed skepticism of working with others for various reasons.

Some stakeholders are coordinating on service functions, such as allowing for low conflict transfers between services. This type of coordination is not ubiquitous across the region though, and this type of coordination was identified as a need among some interviewees.

“The long-distance runs ruin the fluidity.”

There are several issues at play that are detrimental to coordination efforts:

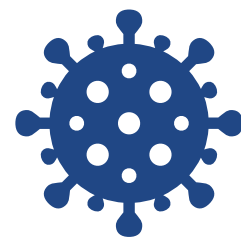
- General lack of communication amongst agencies
- Limited time and resources to work on coordination efforts
- No current incentives to coordinate (besides the potential for 5310 funding)

It should be noted, though, that any lack of coordination is not necessarily a reflection of an unwillingness to coordinate. In most cases, the relationships between organizations and key staff among are strong, and so is the desire for coordination, but the practice of coordination appears to be held back by lack of communication and lack of regional leadership.

“All things being equal, if centralized dispatch gets off the ground, it would make it easier to coordinate transportation between the providers.”

COVID-19 Impacts

While the initial impact of the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020-2021 was very similar across all organizations, the lack of coordination between services and organizations in the region quickly sent many of the service providers and organizations in very different directions. While some continued to run services at regular service levels, others reduced services and even stopped services for periods of time, while offering alternative services, such as grocery runs. Services provided by tribal nations are still quite limited. With pandemic-related emergency measures for federal programs, providers also had opportunities to use 5310 funds for vouchers, but they now must be able to track the voucher to do so. Whatever the tactic, a chief concern among stakeholders was retaining staff; however, some were forced to furlough drivers and/or dispatchers and have yet to recover from those losses.



When shutdowns began in March of 2020, nearly every organization experienced a rapid, steep decline in ridership for every service type. However, the pandemic also revealed the level to which certain communities rely on transit, as some services

maintained relatively high levels of ridership (such as Sunshine Transit), suggesting that there were always very few “choice” riders. The pandemic also impacted how users move around spatially.

The recovery is also varied for regions and providers, as some have returned to near pre-pandemic levels, while others are still running services at 25% or less of the pre-pandemic ridership levels. The reasons for this appear to vary, but notably include lingering fears of sharing enclosed spaces, ongoing cultural conflicts regarding the wearing of masks, and reduced capacity that resulted from formal and informal mandates.

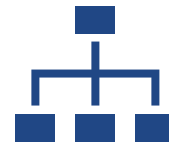
Needs, Gaps, and Barriers

The needs, gaps, and barriers discussion was quite broad, but was addressed often enough during stakeholder interviews for it to be a major theme with several subthemes, including organizational leadership, the need for a broader regional plan, school transportation, and potential census changes.



Organizational Structure & Geographic Barriers

Stakeholders expressed an absence of any organizational structure to address legislative issues. The providers also find themselves hindered by what they see as inconsistent expectations from ADOT&PF with regard to service planning and funding that prevent them from implementing much-needed service in the Mat-Su Valley. Lastly, planning for and measuring service performance is often challenging when, as is often the case, measures of performance are esoteric and non-specific.



The service needs of urban and rural areas are vastly different, and unfortunately these differences can be extremely spatially complex due to service and municipal boundaries and funding designations for place types. Some agencies also noted geographic barriers to service such as limited access highways (and frontage roads) that can cut off routes and cause significant disruptions to providing reliable transportation. Additionally, weather in Alaska during the winter months can present a massive challenge, especially for those areas that are rural or on tribal lands that may not have consistent snowplowing. The Borough’s lack of road powers is currently the biggest barrier related to infrastructure and maintenance. This barrier is compounded by a disconnect between land use and transportation infrastructure. The Mat-Su Borough’s lack of road powers means the entity cannot use area wide tax revenues to build transportation infrastructure, limiting its ability to plan for all modes. When projects go to the voters for permission to bond for infrastructure, the highest priority road projects typically receive funding, leaving transit infrastructure with no voice.

An additional issue, and one of the most significant, is the lack of non-emergency medical transportation (NEMT) services in the Borough. NEMT services are offered

through a variety of means, whether by contract through a local transit provider or through a contract with a national private company (for example, Logisticare or Acadian). However, previous efforts to find a private provider for the Borough have been unsuccessful, and no local transit provider is currently providing NEMT service. As such, would-be NEMT trips fall to the local emergency service provider, holding up call lines and requiring precious emergency service provider resources. Currently, the Mat-Su Borough does not possess health powers. As such, support for NEMT type of services is quite limited from the planning organization.

Planning Needs

Planning is tied closely to rapid regional growth and potential changes related to the 2020 decennial census, outlined later in the section. A number of entities expressed the desire to plan for more long-term service needs; however, either don't have sufficient resources (i.e. time & staff), or are unclear on a regional vision for the Mat-Su Borough. Throughout the course of the conversations, there is clearly a need for strategic planning for transit service, whether for connectivity amongst various areas within the Valley or connectivity between the Valley and Anchorage. All entities expressed a continued interest in the ability to plan ahead and work with other providers to coordinate service. This is especially true of the tribal nations, as well as social and human service providers. It is recommended that the region's providers work together to develop a 5-10-year strategic service plan.



During multiple interviews, there was quite a bit of discussion around the development of a fixed route system. Since the previous coordinated plan in 2018, the Mat-Su Valley experienced rapid growth, warranting the need for stronger public transportation services. Several social service providers expressed a need for a fixed route system in Wasilla that also connects to the government offices in Palmer. Additionally, commuter service was a major topic of discussion, particularly between the Anchorage Metropolitan Area and the Mat-Su Valley. Several entities expressed a need for customers to travel between both areas for employment, higher education, and medical appointments.

School Transportation

School transportation was brought up by multiple agencies as a need, whether to and from school, or for after school activities. There are several new charter schools that are starting or planned, and the charter schools do not currently have access to MSB school district transportation services. Currently, transportation to these schools is provided by parents; in some cases, adding congestion to already cramped neighborhoods. There are also planned schools on tribal lands with no transportation services associated with them. There's a great need for transportation to after school activities. Some services are currently being



provided by local operators; however, other organizations do not help support the costs of these services, meaning a greater financial burden on the provider(s). It is recommended that this plan includes a strategy for the school district, charter schools, tribal nations, and providers work together to plan for school transportation and access.

“We’ve tried to fill a lot of the gaps, but there’s no funding to back it. Without enough funding the school programs and routes are in jeopardy.”

Decennial Census Changes

With the rapid growth in the Mat-Su Valley, the Borough is in the planning stages to develop the region’s Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), which will help further coordination and planning efforts, as the results of the 2020 decennial census have determined the Palmer-Wasilla region will be urbanized as of December 2022. Several stakeholders expressed curiosity regarding the process and the desire to stay informed as changes happen.



“No kid wants to be homeless. They want to matter.”

Priority Populations

Stakeholders were asked to identify service and mobility characteristics, gaps, needs, or concerns for priority populations that they serve. Common themes that emerged include the following:

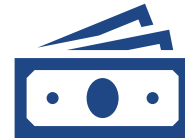


- Several outlying areas of the region are not served by transit, and rural/tribal services do not cover enough of the whole area to compensate. Stakeholders noted there are a lot of at-risk populations that reside within the gap between Valley Transit and Sunshine Transit service areas.
- Ensuring priority populations are represented in community engagement activities is of particular concern, and tribal nation representatives expressed concern over tribal elders being “left behind”, specifically. In general, there is a need to collect a wider, more representative sample of community feedback across the board in the Mat-Su Valley.
- Income insecure populations of all types are at risk of service gaps. Stakeholders noted the difficulties in providing affordable transportation because several providers have issues with staffing, education, capital, and service costs.
- Providing services for school aged children and at-risk youth was a notable concern among several stakeholders. They noted that the expansion of

schools, particularly charter schools, is a challenge. Additionally, connectivity for at-risk youth to social services, employment, and education is a critical issue.

Funding

Stakeholders noted that the lack of funding is a hinderance to providing the services needed for their respective communities. While funding is an issue across the region, the specific needs vary between organizations and providers.



Some agencies need additional funds to purchase new vehicles as they age beyond their useful life, while others are looking for funding to hire and retain drivers and expand their service. Other entities are looking for funding for service expansion and new capital projects. Agencies in rural areas with smaller service areas face an issue where their vehicles age but do not reach the miles needed to upgrade to new vehicles. On the contrary, rural agencies that serve large areas have vehicles that are driven very long distances. The stakeholders from these agencies voiced their concern over the way their revenue miles are calculated, stating that funding sources do not cover the extremely long deadhead miles that accrue when returning from these trips.

Lastly, there is the issue of local match. Currently local match is being provided by the Mat-Su Health Foundation for the service providers. With the rapid regional growth, local match should be planned for and collected other ways, especially if funding streams for transit service change. Stakeholders should consider partnerships with local municipalities and the possibility of medical service provision to serve as possible channels for local match.

Interview Talking Points Guide

The following provides a high-level overview of the topics and questions that were covered in stakeholder interview discussions:



Getting to Know You

- Tell me about your organization and the services you provide:
- Do you currently work with other organizations (e.g., Valley Metro, AnchorRides, Sunshine, etc., to coordinate services)?



Existing Conditions

- How transportation services within the region currently support individual or organizational interests?
- How is the transportation system working for priority populations (i.e., youth, Veterans, older adults, individuals with disabilities)?



Needs and Gaps

- Concerns of priority populations
- Barriers to improving the system and services for priority populations
- Markets that are not well served by the existing transportation system that are particularly important to serve
- Inefficiencies in public transportation or other mobility options operating in the region



Recommendations/Opportunities/Gaps

- Key players to successful transit service planning and development and/or service provision
- Opportunities to improve access to transit and mobility options
- Opportunities to make it easier and safer to access transit & stops in your community
- What could be done differently for regional (transfer) trips?
- What specific service improvements would you like to see funded?
- How would you suggest those improvements best get funded?
- Additional examples of programs, policies, or improvements which MSB should consider?
- Besides funding, what prevents transportation and mobility improvements
- Your vision for transportation in your community



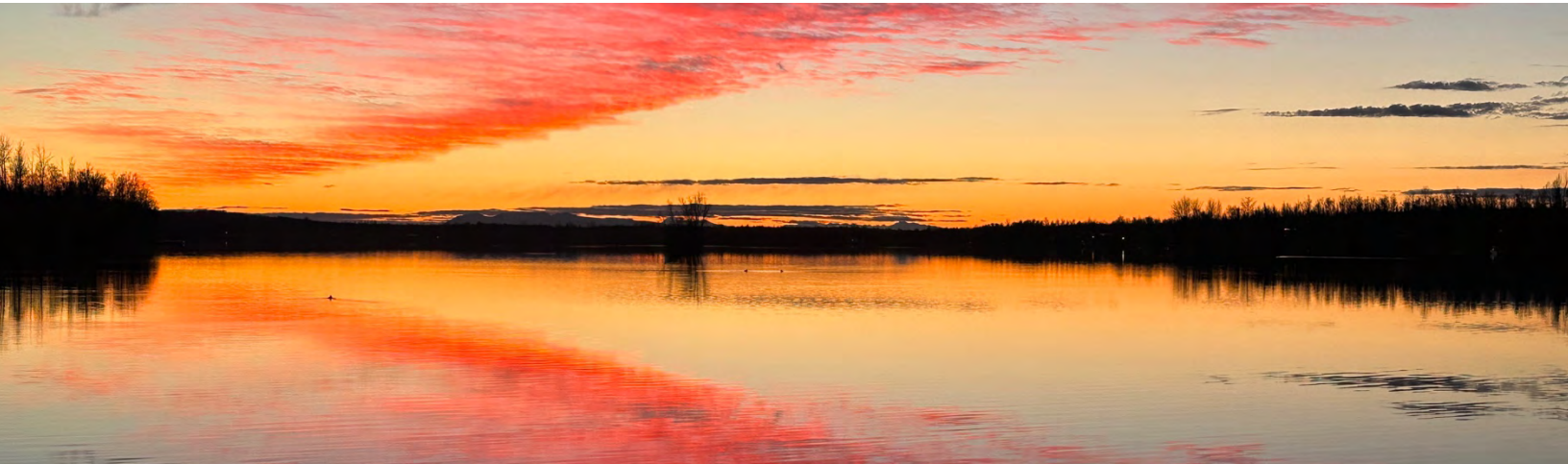
Workshop

In October 2022, the plan Advisory Committee convened at an in-person workshop facilitated by the consulting team to identify project goals and strategies. The workshop agenda included:



- A review of the state of the region, including demographic maps and service inventories.
- Stakeholder feedback to date—interview themes, and a discussion of needs and gaps.
- A detailed discussion of proposed goals and associated strategies for the region. The attendees agreed on the proposed strategies and subsequently gave initial prioritization rankings to the strategies.

Upon conclusion of the workshop, the consulting team summed up themes, comments, and documented the stakeholders' preferred goals and strategies. The advisory committee met two more times in November and December, respectively, to provide comments and feedback on the strategies and further prioritize the final fleshed-out strategies in November. These goals and strategies can be found in Chapter 5.



Chapter 5.

Goals and Strategies

This chapter showcase the region’s vision and mission statements, respectively, as well as “clearly articulated” goals and strategies for future implementation. Before diving into the specificities of those items, it’s important to discuss their purpose.

Vision and Mission Statements

Vision statements focus on the future. The horizon of vision statements is typically long-term; capturing what the agency(ies) would like to become over time. As such, vision statements may only need updating every 10+ years (if at all), meaning that there is little need to update the vision statement for a plan with a 5-year horizon.

Mission statements highlight how the Mat-Su Borough currently functions. Like vision statements, mission statements may only need be updated every 10+ years; unless the work of the region is so dynamic it would warrant more frequent updates to the mission statement. Mission statements typically capture the things a group or region is accomplishing to achieve their goals.

Previously, stakeholders in the Borough worked to establish agreed-upon vision and mission statements with the development of their 2018 coordinated plan update. The group reviewed the vision statement as a part of the 2022 update; however, determined the statements still held true for the future:

Vision Statement

A sustainable, multi-modal transportation network that effectively meets the transportation needs of Mat-Su Borough residents of all ages and abilities.

Mission Statement

To enhance mobility for senior citizens, individuals with disabilities, individuals with low incomes, and other groups lacking adequate transportation in the Mat-Su Borough through improved public transit and human service transportation coordination.

Goals and Objectives

Goals and objectives are statements that describe what the coordinated plan will accomplish as well as the overall value that coordination contributes to transportation in region. Goals are a critical component to coordinated planning, providing overall context for what the plan is working to accomplish from a regional perspective, while operating as guideposts for strategy implementation and the activities of the future coordinating committee (to be established based on strategy recommendations in the next section).

The project Advisory Committee took part in an in-person workshop in October 2022 to update and develop goals and strategies for the coordinated plan. The Advisory Committee was first asked to identify common themes around a Strengths, Challenges, Opportunities, and Threats (SCOT) analysis for the Mat-Su Borough, as well as a discussion of how they see coordination currently and what the stakeholders would like to see from concerted coordination efforts. Based on the themes and discussion, the team was able to flesh out five goals for the next 5-year plan horizon. The themes captured from the workshop are:

- Access
- Safety
- Collaboration
- Needs
- Education & Awareness
- Funding/Resources
- Data
- Affordability

The project team used these themes to develop goals. The goals and their descriptions are captured in the following section. The goals are listed as follows, *in no particular order, though they are numbered for easy reference.*



Goal 1: Develop a Comprehensive Plan for Communication, Education, and Awareness throughout the Borough

The Mat-Su Borough is not only growing at a rapid pace but is as large as the state of West Virginia. As the area is growing at such a rapid pace, there's a need to continually educate regional partners on coordination efforts made to date and how the partners (stakeholders) work together to problem solve Borough-wide. Additionally, there is a need to educate the public on services (transportation and human service) available to them and how to access those services.



Goal 2: Strengthen and Sustain Financial Opportunities

Sustainable funding streams will always be a challenge for providers; however, with the onset of CARES and CRSSA act funding, providers have more options, though not sustainable. Additionally, rapid regional growth emphasizes need for service planning to meet the needs of the population. Services in the Borough have been utilizing Mat-Su Health Foundation grant funding for local match, but the time

has come for providers to plan for long-term solutions as cities in the Mat-Su Valley plan to transition to “urbanized” with decennial census designations.



Goal 3: Establish a Data Collection and Management Plan to Inform Future Planning Efforts

Data collection is important to all operations, but is critical to transit planning and operation, especially in a world where critics would like to equate “empty buses” to lack of success. Ironically, highways and roads are also empty during non-peak hours, but the public transportation industry always has more to prove. Data helps agencies make informed decisions, identify problems, develop strategic approaches, and makes the argument for additional funding. Data is power in a world that very much relies on information to back up plans. As such this goal captures the need to build on the current data sharing network, and develop a new, strategic plan for data collection and management.



Goal 4: Define and Address Regional Transportation Needs

Needs in the Mat-Su Borough include those for the providers: ongoing maintenance, operations, and capital planning; and subsequent needs of the public. Providers have worked together for over a decade to develop services and programs in probable “gaps” throughout the region; however, with rapid growth, the gaps not only grow and change, but some may move. Additionally, partners should work together to clearly understand where service gaps may be within agency service areas.



Goal 5: Support Ongoing Coordination and Collaboration, while Creating New Partnerships for Coordination

Links and connections must be made throughout the region regardless of the “invisible barriers” that Borough boundaries, city limits, and transit service areas make up. Mat-Su partners have made huge strides to address connectivity, but with rapid growth, will need to continue to work together to close gaps in service for target populations, both within the Borough and between the Borough and the Anchorage Metropolitan Statistical Area.



Goal 6: Design Safe, Accessible, and Affordable Services for Borough Residents

Given the wide geographic expanse of the Mat-Su Valley, providers and stakeholders need to work together to plan for services that are safe, accessible, and affordable for the residents therein. Considerations should be made for safety and accessibility at stops (shelters, walking paths, lighting, etc.), and programs should be offered for target populations for whom cost is a barrier in using public transportation services.

The development of strategies happened organically prior to the goals development at the advisory committee workshop. The consulting team first presented a list of

strategies from the previous plan, and the group discussed which ones had been implemented, with the opportunity to determine if a strategy should be retained from the previous plan. The stakeholder group was then asked to discuss ideas and strategies they would like to implement if money were no object, with consideration for those strategies needed related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Strategies from the 2018 Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan

There were nine main strategies with implementation detail established in the 2018 plan. The strategies were grouped in two main categories: 1) those that would improve coordination, and 2) those that would improve services. Many of the strategies are still relevant for the 2023 plan update as well.

1. Centralize Mobility Management Services
2. Reduce Operations Costs while Maintaining Service Levels
3. Determine the Appropriate Combination of Transportation Services
4. Generate New Revenue
5. Improve Information Access & Quality
6. Improve Medicaid Approval Process for Providers & Recipients
7. Improve Affordability for Residents
8. Improve Service Availability
9. Improve Marketing

Strategies for the 2023 Coordinated Plan

Based on the previous strategies, the SCOT analysis, stakeholder interviews, and advisory committee meetings, the group worked to develop detailed strategies that would be associated with each goal. The following section outlines the goals and their respective strategies for 2023.



Goal 1: Develop a comprehensive plan for communication, education, and awareness throughout the Borough

Strategy 1a: Design and Develop a Travel Training Program

Travel training programs are designed to teach people with disabilities, older adults, youth, veterans, and/or low-income populations to travel safely and independently on the range of services available within a given area.

- Travel training can include information on communicating with drivers, technology training and a review of eligibility requirements for different services.

- Teaching people to use transportation services safely and independently can reduce the barrier of personal transportation to access resources as well as reduce congestion and traffic safety risk on the roadways.
- Travel training can dispel misconceptions and concerns about public transportation services among youth and caregivers of youth, including youth with special needs and/or that speak languages other than English, and build confidence in how independent travel can increase youth access to opportunity such as before/after school programs and employment.

Strategy 1b: Engagement Planning for Local Governments

Elected officials can be helpful advocates for public transit plans and funding; however, these positions often turn over frequently, as do positions within municipalities. There is a continual need to educate municipal staff, elected officials, and other official positions on the purpose and value of public transportation options.

- Mat-Su stakeholders identified the need to develop messaging on how the local community and its citizens benefit from public transportation.
- This strategy will include an additional objective that stakeholders identified during the workshop: "compiling return on investment information for elected officials and strategy makers." Stakeholders feel it's important to pull together data related to return on investment in transit. Conveniently, the group will be able to use the recently released report that discusses the economic impacts of transit in Alaska, that was highlighted in the plans section of this document.

Strategy 1c: Borough Listening Sessions / Town Hall(s)

Stakeholders identified a need for the community to have an outlet to discuss needs related to transportation and mobility.

- "Listening sessions", and/or town halls allow community members the opportunity to hear about upcoming plans related to public transit in the Borough, and comment on those upcoming plans. Additionally, town halls allow these same community members to address topics and concerns related to transportation in the region.
- These type of outreach events are mutually beneficial, wherein stakeholders may listen and learn from the community, and citizens may learn about upcoming plans. These events also allow for public trust and transparency to be established.

Strategy 1d: Establish a Formal Marketing Campaign on Transportation Resources in the Mat-Su Valley

People who reside in, work in, and visit the Mat-Su Valley may be unaware of both what transit services are available and for which services they may be eligible. The distribution of consumer-friendly, accessible educational materials can help to increase public awareness of services.

- Some of the service providers already distribute educational materials through various forms of media, but a next step may involve a coordinated public awareness campaign targeting at-risk populations in the region.

Strategy 1e: Develop Consistent Online Resources

This strategy is comprised of two objectives highlighted in the stakeholder workshop: ensuring an online (one-click) resource for transportation and mobility is developed for the Mat-Su Borough, and compiling a “map viewer”, wherein individuals can search and find available transit services, walking paths, accessible paths to bus stops, and bike routes

- Ensuring a consistent online resource will allow individuals to further educate themselves on available services and will allow providers to develop a keen understanding on true “gaps” in mobility and access.

Strategy 1f: Support Access to Existing Community Services (libraries, drug testing, food pantries, etc.) by Hosting Informational Webinars, Meetings, and Providing Leave-behind Materials Informing the Community how to Use Public Transportation

This strategy can be an off shoot of the formal marketing campaign, detailed above, but is called out because it can be implemented immediately, with or without a specific marketing campaign.

- Stakeholders can collaborate with partner organizations, non-profits, and social services to identify opportunities for coordinated engagement and production of educational materials.
- Online and paper surveys can be regularly distributed to gauge public awareness and interest in transportation services to identify opportunities for improvement.

Strategy 1g: Develop Educational Materials on all Mobility Options in the Region (not just public transportation)

The citizens of the Mat-Su Valley would benefit from general information on all transportation options available to them.

- While taxi and for-profit providers are limited in the region, these services do exist; albeit not widely advertised. Additionally, individuals may benefit from information related to airport and commuter services, as well as options for tourists.



Goal 2. Strengthen Provider Resources and Create Sustainable Funding Streams

Strategy 2a: Increase resources for local match

As the region grows and potentially develops into a more “urbanized” area, providers will not only need to re-evaluate the funding they are eligible for, but how local match is allocated.

- In larger and growing urban areas, local match for federal funding streams is typically contributed through the municipality that is being served, and sometimes with a vote for a portion of tax (sales, gas, or other).
- Transit providers in the Mat-Su Borough are currently being supported with grants through the Mat-Su Health Foundation but need to expand local match options as the region changes and grows.

Strategy 2b: Develop a System to Identify and Promote Funding Opportunities for Regional Providers and Programs

Stakeholders expressed a need to better understand funding opportunities available to them. It would be helpful to have a lead agency, like the Mat-Su Borough (or future Metropolitan Planning Organization), establish a database for available funding streams, application processes, and timelines for securing funding for current and new public transit and mobility projects.

Strategy 2c: Grant Writing Assistance Program

Grant writing is a skilled activity that requires technical knowledge as well as storytelling ability. It is a time-intensive activity that generally occurs in cycles. It is harder for under-resourced agencies to respond to grant opportunities or submit competitive applications because of the investment of time and resources needed to do so.

- The Mat-Su Borough can develop a grant writing technical assistance program for under-resourced agencies to support the development of competitive applications, such as support with crash analysis, mapping/GIS analysis, graphics, and proposal narratives.
- The Borough can also help build (and/or support) agency capacity to respond to grant opportunities themselves and through offering trainings on grant program requirements, statutes, cycles, and analysis processes for local partners.

Strategy 2d: Continue to Support the Mat-Su Borough's Development of a Regional Metropolitan Planning Organization

During plan implementation, lead and support organizations will use the proposed performance measures associated with each strategy—and/or new ones that emerge—to establish a baseline.

- The baseline may be as simple as a “yes, this item was completed” or “no, the item was not completed” or may be a number or percentage associated with the strategy itself. At this time, the lead and support agencies will be responsible for measuring performance, with Mat-Su Borough oversight (and eventually MPO oversight) for final reporting purposes.



Goal 3: Establish a Data Collection and Management Plan to Inform Future Planning Efforts

Strategy 3a: Expand and Utilize Current Data Sharing Plan

The service providers in the region currently have a more “informal” data sharing plan based on need. The providers share information (trip needs, ridership information) to loosely track service demand.

- The providers would like to expand the tools and methods they use to share data currently to make better informed decisions for the region.

Strategy 3b: Analyze Travel Patterns and Regional Demographics to Better Understand Gaps in Service Areas

There is a wide range of travel patterns in the Mat-Su Borough by virtue of the region being so expansive.

- Collecting information related to travel and trip patterns would help providers better plan for (and provide) much needed service and assist in “making the case” for more service and funding streams.
- Understanding travel patterns also benefits the local community so that transit and planning agencies can ensure the right type of service is offered in the right places.

Strategy 3c: Develop a Regional Data Management Plan

Stakeholders expressed a need to develop a more formalized data management plan for the Mat-Su Borough. The plan would help providers with consistent data collection, provide guidelines for updating and managing Borough-wide data, set reporting requirements, including regular timelines for uploading and sharing information.

- A data management plan may also be used to develop a more extensive transportation database, with an up-to-date vehicle inventory, that could pave the way for a Borough-wide asset management plan.



Goal 4: Define and Address Regional Transportation Needs

Strategy 4a: Develop a Borough-wide Transit Development Plan

Stakeholders have collectively expressed a need for a transit development plan for the Mat-Su Borough. Transit Development Plans (TDPs) can help regions plan for medium- and long-term transit needs.

- TDPs can include passenger needs surveys, detailed ridership data collection and analysis, trip patterns and analysis.
- In the case of Mat-Su Borough, a TDP can help navigate the potential impending changes to the urbanized area and funding for providers by setting forth a detailed plan.

Strategy 4b: Mat-Su Borough Leverages Agency Leadership to Emphasize Transit Needs

This strategy, which is a component of the formal marketing plan, relies on agency leadership (assembly members and other elected officials) to advocate for transit needs in the Borough. Funding for transit and transit projects is highly competitive at the state level and having advocacy through local leadership will help advance transit projects and much needed funding for transit in the Borough.

Strategy 4c: Identify “Need” to Determine if the Need can be Fulfilled by Existing Service or Whether the “Need” Requires New Service through Formula 5310 Funding

This strategy drills down into services currently provided in the region overlaid with the needs of the target populations for 5310 funding (older adults, individuals with disabilities, other politically and socially marginalized populations) to determine various transit needs in the Borough and whether those needs can be met with a current service provider.

- If the need is truly a “gap”, in that there is no service to service that newly identified “need”, then the Borough should have a plan in place for ranking order of magnitude needs for new 5310 service. Having this needs strategy in place is a good means to start, especially in the strategy prioritization section.

Strategy 4d: Develop Driver Training and Retention Programs

As noted earlier, the Mat-Su Borough is facing a shortage of drivers. Beyond the steps already taken by school districts and providers have taken to incentivize recruitment, other considerations, such as cash referral bonuses, paid Commercial Driver’s License (CDL) training, and time retention bonuses may help support longevity.

- Transit operators can convene with other agencies and unions in the Borough and State to review existing pay, benefits, and licensing requirements to identify opportunities for improvement.
- Agencies and unions should also collaborate to find opportunities to add incentive pay not just for newly hired drivers, but for drivers willing and able to take on relatively more challenging assignments and routes or those who have been resilient and continued to drive throughout the pandemic.
- Programs which recognize drivers, dispatchers, and other customer-facing personnel will help improve the sense of community ownership and morale on board the coordinated transit system. All transportation providers – public, private, and non-profit – can incorporate driver recognition as part of marketing and public-facing materials through calling attention to individual drivers’ stories and establishing an email address or hotline requesting individual commendations from riders. February is Love the Bus / School Bus Driver Appreciation Month, so it is a good month to target for appreciation activities.



Goal 5: Support Ongoing Coordination and Collaboration, while Creating New Partnerships for Coordination

Strategy 5a: Implement Borough-wide Mobility Management Program

Mobility management can be broadly defined as creating and managing mobility options, at both the systemic and system-to-customer levels, to improve the reach, efficiency, and affordability of public transportation services.

- Transportation impacts every piece of individual’s daily lives, and through the development of a mobility management network, regions and providers can increase efficiency and effectiveness in service operations and further coordination efforts.
- The development of a mobility management network starts with bringing together transportation and mobility providers, other health and human service agency staff, decision-

makers, community members, and riders/customers, which will allow for the exchange of ideas and development of solutions and strategies that will address transportation-related barriers.

- It is important to note here that Connect Mat-Su (www.connectmatsu.org) currently operates as the only mobility management-type operation in the Borough. Connect Mat-Su is a new organization, and according to their information can assist with paying for transportation, exploring public transportation options, navigating medical transportation and help with school transportation options. Connect Mat-Su was established by the Mat-Su Health Foundation with support from community partners to help with mobility options for the residents of the Mat-Su.

Strategy 5b: Formalize Agreements and Processes for Leveraging Funding Services and Planning

Tribal communities emphasized interest in better coordinating agreements between entities (i.e. tribal nations and the Alaska DOT&PF, tribal nations and the Borough, tribal nations and providers, and between the providers and the Borough).

- These more formal agreements not only signify a willingness to coordinate and collaborate but allow for exchange of ideas and agency resources (and potentially funding) for transit planning and services.

Strategy 5c: Develop Borough-wide Coordinating Committee

Most Coordinated Human Service Transportation Plans are “successful”, because upon adoption, the agencies involved in plan development continue to regularly meet for implementation updates.

- Coordinating Committees typically consist of the same stakeholders involved in the advisory committee for the plan and meet regularly (monthly, bi-monthly, quarterly) to discuss strategy implementation champions and status updates for all the providers.
- Some Coordinating Committees have “working groups” that meet at higher frequencies and consist of those agency representatives that are champions for a particular strategy(ies), or with those agencies who have decision-making powers. Example working groups include executive committee, marketing committee, funding and grants committee, etc.

Strategy 5d: Develop Partnerships for those Non-profit Agencies who may Need Support with Vehicle Maintenance

This is especially apparent as the region works to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic as there are not enough resources needed to perform daily functions as they existed prior to March 2020. Limited resources (drivers, funding, vehicles, etc.) affect the continuation of a diverse array of services, including commuter service, the development of more demand response service, and special education transportation.

- Non-profit organizations that provide public transportation services may consider partnering on vehicle maintenance services, whether through a singular location or sharing of mechanics willing to travel throughout the Borough.

Strategy 5e: Coordinate with Critical Health and Social Services to Better Provide Consistent Transportation for those who Rely on the Service(s)

Due to the lack of non-emergency transportation service (NEMT) in the Mat-Su Borough, at-risk community members may struggle with how to access critical services, including dialysis, mental health services, drug testing facilities, etc.)

- Coordinating with the operators of these health and social services, as well as those agencies involved in the prisoner re-entry programming, would vastly help ensure that community members have the transportation needed to access critical care.
- Once a clearer picture is developed of the demand for health and social services, providers can work to establish more consistent transportation service offerings and/or consistent service times.



Goal 6: Design Safe, Accessible, and Affordable Services for Borough Residents

Strategy 6a: Develop a Program for Discounted Fares for Older Adults and Individuals with Disabilities

Various programs may be developed to expand the affordability of transit for target populations. In other areas, “ride free” programs may be developed as a pilot with grant funding. In some cases, funding is provided with local sales tax and grant funding with municipalities eventually taking over long-term funding.

- In other areas, transit providers partner with non-profit organizations to fund monthly passes that are distributed directly to the individuals and families that need them.
- Multiple conversations with youth groups expressed interest in expanding or maintaining affordable public transportation, given the other burdens families face in the rising regional costs of housing.

Strategy 6b: Upgrade Facilities and Bus Stops and Transfer Stations

It goes without saying that the climate in Alaska can be harsh, particularly during the winter. Providing consistent shelters, lighting, and accessible ramps at bus stops and transfer points would help passengers feel safer riding local public transit services.

- Providers could start by documenting stop locations and the “amenities” (bench, shelter, flag sign) at those stops, targeting higher ridership locations as priority for upgraded amenities.

Strategy 6c: Further Identify Public Transportation Infrastructure Needs in the Borough

This strategy is a recommendation for a larger infrastructure plan in the Mat-Su Borough that looks at all transportation infrastructure (bus shelters, accessible ramps to bus stops and transfer points, bike racks, lighting, benches, etc.).

- Having an infrastructure plan would help prepare the region to receive funding for infrastructure, should it become available for “shovel ready” projects, and would help the providers allocate funding based on order of magnitude.
- Infrastructure plans can also detail the balance of amenities in urban versus rural areas, as rural needs have been identified multiple times throughout the course of the coordinated planning project.

Strategy 6d: Work with the Alaska DOT&PF to support the Borough’s level of Autonomy over Road Clearing During the Winter Months

All transit providers, and the Borough emphasized a great need to have better road clearing during the winter months. The challenge is that roads in the Borough (like so many other places) have various jurisdictions: cities, Borough, state, tribal nations, etc.), and the standards for clearing the roads are inconsistent.

- Providers, like Valley Transit, provide commuter service between the Borough and Anchorage; however, several of the stops are on roads managed by the state, and those transfer points are inconsistently cleared, meaning access to the bus stop is a challenge.
- Providing the Borough with road-clearing powers, and the funding to clear the roads for additional resources, would mean that the roads transit providers operate on are more consistently cleared for customers.

Strategy 6e: Develop and Support Borough-wide Technology Measures for Customers and Providers alike

Stakeholders felt the need to capture a separate strategy to address lack of technology throughout the Borough; as such, this strategy was added after thoughtful discussion and consideration. Since this strategy was not originally included in prioritization, it will be given an “unranked” qualifier. It will be at the discretion of the advisory committee to determine where this strategy later ranks upon plan adoption and implementation.

- Transit providers in rural areas, particularly Sunshine Transit and Chickaloon, expressed a need for customers to have better access to technology to book rides. Stories were shared of multiple customers that don’t have access to mobile phones, meaning that if they want to book a ride, they have to go to a local social services center or community center to use a phone to book a ride.
- Internet is spotty and limited in certain areas of the Borough, particularly rural areas. Several states are working on 5G initiatives wherein mobile service and cellular towers will be improved statewide.
- Providers also expressed an interest in next bus information at stops and transfer locations. Next bus technology is possible when services operate on a more consistent schedule. This would allow individuals who have limited or no access to technology to better understand wait times for their ride(s).

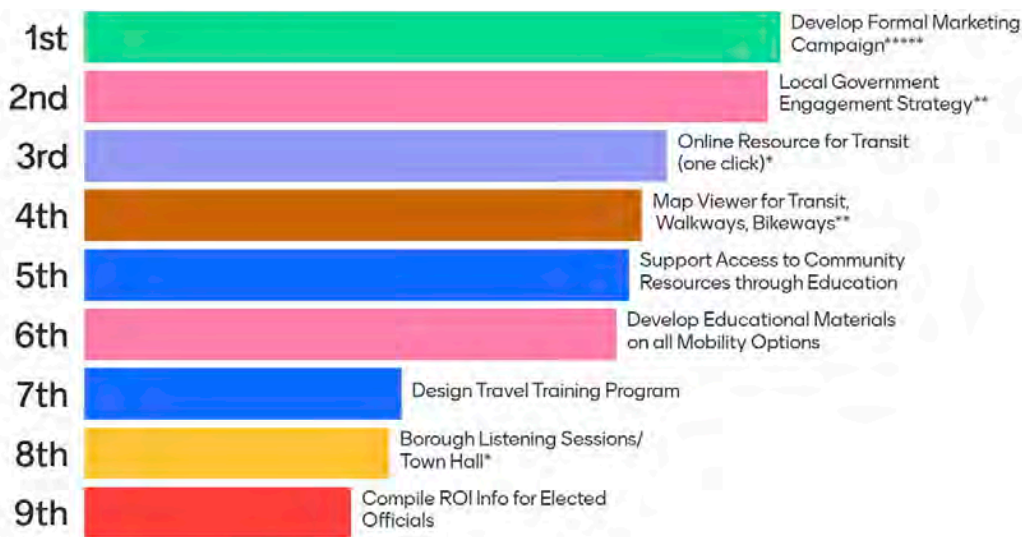
Strategy Prioritization and Plan Implementation

In November 2022, the Advisory Committee met to prioritize the strategies that had been aligned with each goal. The strategy prioritization aided the project team in assigning timelines to the individual strategies as well as potential funding sources. For each goal, the committee ranked the strategies from highest to lowest priority. It is important to note that just because a strategy received a lower ranking does not mean that it is less important than the other strategies within that goal. Higher prioritization was given to those strategies that the committee wished to focus on first. This next section provides a review of the strategy prioritization that took place in real-time at the November advisory committee meeting. (Note: the wording (but not the meaning) of some strategies has changed slightly since they were ranked as illustrated below.)



Goal 1 Strategy Prioritization

Develop a comprehensive plan for communication, education, and awareness throughout the Borough



Goal 2 Strategy Prioritization

Strengthen Provider Resources and Create Sustainable Funding Streams





Goal 3 Strategy Prioritization

Establish a Data Collection and Management Plan to Inform Future Planning Efforts

- 1st  Analyze Travel Patterns & Demographics to Better Plan for Gaps
- 2nd  Develop Regional Data Management Plan For Sharing & Collection
- 3rd  Expand & Utilize Data Sharing Plan****



Goal 4 Strategy Prioritization

Define and Address Regional Transportation Needs

- 1st  Develop Borough-Wide Transit Development Plan
- 2nd  Identify "Need" to Determine if it Can Be Fulfilled with Current Service or If New Funding is Needed
- 3rd  MSB Leverages Agency Leadership to Emphasize Transit Needs*****
- 4th  Develop Driver Training and Retention Programs



Goal 5 Strategy Prioritization

Support Ongoing Coordination and Collaboration, while Creating New Partnerships for Coordination

- 1st  Develop Coordinating Committee*****
- 2nd  Formalize Agreements & Processes for Sharing Funding & Planning Services*****
- 3rd  Implement Mobility Management Program****
- 4th  Partnerships & Support for Administrative Staff Shortages
- 5th  Develop Partnerships for Non-Profits who Need Vehicle Maintenance Support
- 6th  Coordination with Dialysis Centers and other Critical Services



Goal 6 Strategy Prioritization

Design Safe, Accessible, and Affordable Services for Borough Residents

- 1st Further Identify Public Transportation Infrastructure Needs for Rural Areas
- 2nd Discounted Fare Program for Older Adults & Individuals w/ Disabilities***
- 3rd Shelter & Facilities for Bus Stops*
- 4th Work with DOT to Ensure Borough has Autonomy over Road Clearing in Winter



Chapter 6.

Plan Implementation and Funding Source

The proposed strategies presented in Chapter 5 of this plan are intended to meet a series of needs uncovered throughout the engagement process; they also include guidance on how they can be implemented. The proposed strategies in this chapter are categorized by goals and then are split further into their prioritization tiers.

After listening to feedback from both the Advisory Committee and stakeholders, the proposed strategies in this plan are prioritized by placement on one of the following order of magnitude categories. Implementation timelines will be associated with each strategy as well. Some strategies may be ready for immediate implementation, whether ranked high or low priority. Other strategies, while ranked “high priority” may take longer to implement. Project timelines range from short (1-2 years) to medium (3-4 years) to long (5+ years).

- **HIGH PRIORITY** - To begin meeting project goals and closing needs, the Mat-Su Borough should consider prioritizing several basic investments and programs in coordination with regional stakeholders. The measures included in the high priority tier are those which have been deemed important by the Advisory Committee in the next couple of years.
- **MEDIUM PRIORITY** - The impacts of these strategies are also consequential, but they are not the highest priority. Some strategies under the Medium Priority tier may also benefit from High Priority strategies being implemented. For example, a pilot flexible transit route may be more successful if there is already an understanding of which communities would be most likely to ride such a service, along with more direct in-person marketing of transit options.
- **LONG-TERM PRIORITY** -Included in the proposed strategies are proposed policies that address larger ongoing challenges, for example, the impacts of census changes and the legacy of systemic discrimination. These proposed policies are given a long-term timeframe, as they will require consideration in the context of all future transportation decisions.

The project team used the strategy rankings to create the implementation plan for the region. The implementation plan depicts strategies with their goals, proposed implementation agency (or team), proposed time to implement, and the priority assigned to the strategy. Based on the prioritization activity captured in Chapter 5, strategies that were listed in the top two spaces are “high” priority, strategies in the 3rd and 4th spaces are “medium” priority, and strategies in the 5th ranked spot and greater are “low” priority.

Using the advisory committee rankings, the proposed timeline for implementation, and the ease of implementation, each strategy is then given an “overall ranking”, in numerical order, for implementation. Other factors, such as funding availability, may impact a strategy’s overall ranking and whether it gets implemented sooner rather than later.

Figure 6-1 Proposed Implementation Timeline

Goal	Strategy	Timeline	Priority	Overall Ranking
	GOAL 1: Develop a Comprehensive Plan for Communication, Education, and Awareness throughout the Borough			
	1.a Design and Develop a Travel Training Program	1-2 years	Low	7
	1.b Engagement Planning for Local Governments	1-2 years	High	2
	1.c Borough Listening Sessions / Town Hall(s)	1-2 years	Low	5
	1.d Establish a Formal Marketing Campaign on Transportation Resources in the Mat-Su Valley	1-2 years	High	1
	1.e Develop Consistent Online Resources	3-4 years	Medium	4
	1.f Support Access to Existing Community Services (libraries, drug testing, food pantries, etc.) by Hosting Informational Webinars, Meetings, and Providing Leave-behind Materials Informing the Community how to Use Public Transportation	1 year or less	Medium	3
	1.g Develop Educational Materials on all Mobility Options in the Region (not just public transportation)	1-2 years	Low	6
	GOAL 2: Strengthen and Sustain Financial Opportunities			
	2.a Increase Resources for Local Match	3-4 years	High	2
	2.b Develop a System to Identify and Promote Funding Opportunities for Regional Providers and Programs	1-2 years	High	1
	2.c Grant Writing Assistance Program	3-4 years	Low	4
	2.d Continue to Support the Mat-Su Borough’s Development of a Regional Metropolitan Planning Organization	3-4 years	Medium	3

Goal	Strategy	Timeline	Priority	Overall Ranking
	GOAL 3: Establish a Data Collection and Management Plan to Inform Future Planning Efforts			
	3.a Expand and Utilize Current Data Sharing Plan	1-2 years	Low	3
	3.b Analyze Travel Patterns and Regional Demographics to Better Understand Gaps in Service Areas	3-4 years	High	1
	3.c Develop a Regional Data Management Plan	3-4 years	Medium	2
	GOAL 4: Define and Address Regional Transportation Needs			
	4.a Develop a Borough-wide Transit Development Plan	1-2 years	High	1
	4.b Mat-Su Borough Leverages Agency Leadership to Emphasize Transit Needs	1-2 years	Medium	2
	4.c Identify "Need" to Determine if the need can be Fulfilled by Existing Service or Whether the "Need" Requires New Service through Formula 5310 Funding	3-4 years	Medium	4
	4.d Develop Driver Training and Retention Programs	3-4 years	Low	3
	GOAL 5: Support Ongoing Coordination and Collaboration, while Creating New Partnerships for Coordination			
	5.a Implement Borough-wide Mobility Management Program	3-4 years	Medium	3
	5.b Formalize Agreements and Processes for Leveraging Funding Services and Planning	1-2 years	High	2
	5.c Develop Borough-wide Coordinating Committee	1-2 years	High	1
	5.d Develop Partnerships for those Non-profit Agencies who may Need Support with Vehicle Maintenance	5+ years	Low	5
	5.e Coordinate with Critical Health and Social Services to Better Provide Consistent Transportation for those who Rely on the Service(s)	3-4 years	Low	4
	GOAL 6: Design Safe, Accessible, and Affordable Services for Borough Residents			
	6.a Develop a Program for Discounted Fares for Older Adults and Individuals with Disabilities	1-2 years	High	1
	6.b Upgrade Facilities at Bus Stops and Transfer Stations	5+ years	Medium	4
	6.c Further Identify Public Transportation Infrastructure Needs in the Borough	3-4 years	High	2
	6.d Work with the Alaska DOT&PF to support the Borough's level of Autonomy over Road Clearing During the Winter Months	1-2 years	Low	3
	6e. Develop and Support Borough-wide Technology Measures for Customers and Providers alike	3-4 years	Unranked	—

Based on the strategy rankings, the highest priority strategies for the region to tackle upon adoption of this coordinated plan are as follows:

- 1.4 Establish a Formal Marketing Campaign on Transportation Resources in the Mat-Su Valley
- 2.2 Develop a System to Identify and Promote Funding Opportunities for Regional Providers and Programs
- 3.2 Analyze Travel Patterns and Regional Demographics to Better Understand Gaps in Service Areas
- 4.1 Develop a Borough-wide Transit Development Plan
- 5.3 Develop Borough-wide Coordinating Committee
- 6.1 Develop a Program for Discounted Fares for Older Adults and Individuals with Disabilities

It is recommended that the newly formed coordinating committee implement strategies according to their priority rankings. These first six strategies are simply the highest-ranked initial steps the stakeholders in the Borough must take to become better coordinated.

The project team worked with the advisory committee to discuss which agencies would support the implementation of each strategy once the plan is approved. Some agencies volunteered to lead the implementation of strategies; others offered general support toward the implementation of the strategy. The team created a table with a live online link so that agencies could “volunteer” by signing up to be a strategy champion. The stakeholders did not finish the sign-ups prior to the completion of this plan, so the Strategy Champions document will continue to be a working document on a shared drive for the Mat-Su Borough and the coordinating committee to continue to use for tracking and amendment purposes.

Potential Funding Sources for Strategy Implementation

It is generally understood with Coordinated Human Service Public Transportation Plans that the purpose of developing and prioritizing strategies is to rank those coordination strategies that should receive Federal Formula 5310 funding for older adults and individuals with disabilities. However, coordinated plans are often written in such a way to benefit more marginalized populations than just older adults and individuals with disabilities, and there’s still a good deal of coordination that needs to occur and limited 5310 funding. As such, it is important to point out that there are multiple possible funding sources entities could tap into for strategy implementation. This next section highlights various types of funding sources at a high level, with a full listing of possible funding sources in the appendix of this plan.

Federal Transportation Funding

On March 15th, 2022, President Joe Biden signed a \$1.5 trillion spending bill to fund the federal government for the remainder of fiscal year 2022, ending on Sept. 30. The following information was taken from the National Conference on State Legislatures; the below amounts have been appropriated for transportation programs:

Just over \$100 billion for federal transportation programs—a total of \$140 billion, a 60% increase, when adding the FY 2022 appropriation provisions contained within the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA). The omnibus fully implements program authorized levels in the infrastructure bill.

- \$61 billion for federal highway investments, along with \$9.5 billion from the infrastructure bill for an FY 2022 total of \$70.5 billion, a 44% increase over 2021.
- \$16.3 billion for public transit, an increase of \$3.3 billion from FY 2021; when combined with the infrastructure bill, public transit funding totals \$20.5 billion in FY 2022, an increase of \$7.6 billion (58%).

The Federal Transportation Administration (FTA) has allocated a significant amount of funding to public transportation planning, service, and operations. Some of those funding categories are outlined in the state transportation funding section, below; however, it is important to note that these funding allocations should be tracked accordingly.

State Transportation Funding

The Division of Statewide Planning and Program Development of the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (ADOT&PF) administers federal transit funding to those providers and operators within the legal requirements of the Federal Transportation Administration (FTA). DOTs typically align their funding allocations with the preparation of Transportation Improvement Plans (TIPs) and State Transportation Improvement Plans (STIPs), approved by planning organizations, such as MPOs. The following federal formula transportation definitions are adapted from the FTA:

- [FTA Section 5307](#) - Mass transit apportionment to urbanized areas based on population, population density and operating performance. The department has authority over the distribution of funds to urbanized areas with a population of less than 200,000. Once an area becomes “urbanized”, the DOT may allocate funding through a local designated recipient, which would be responsible for reporting to the FTA.
- [FTA Section 5309](#) - Mass transit discretionary funds for capital projects only. The presence of an identifier number in the project description indicates the transit agency has received the funds requested. Otherwise, the numbers shown in each fiscal year simply reflect needs as perceived by the requesting agencies and operators. Funding for the following programs is constrained to

the Federal Transit Administration's published estimates of future funding levels.

- [FTA Section 5310](#) - Provides federal funds to public and private nonprofit entities for the transportation of elderly individuals and/or individuals with disabilities. Allocation of funding is determined by locally determined strategy prioritization in an adopted coordinated plan.
- [FTA Section 5311](#) - Provides funds for Rural Transit Programs. Alaska DOT&PF currently does not receive enough 5311 funding to support all the would-be rural transit operators in the state. As such, a provider must be registered with the state in order to receive some share of 5311 funding.

Other Funding Sources

NADTC Funding and Community Grants

There are other funding sources available for transportation planning and services for marginalized populations at a national level. The National Aging and Disability Transportation Center (NADTC) issues annual RFPs for a variety of transportation grants for older adults and individuals with disabilities. In 2021, NADTC announced a new funding opportunity, Equity and Accessibility: Transportation Planning Grant Program. Grant opportunities through NADTC are typically announced in late Spring and awarded in August-September each year.







NADTC also offers community grants that are designed to support communities assess transportation needs. The grants can assist with the development and implementation of innovations and new models for increasing the availability of accessible transportation services for older adults and individuals with disabilities. Grants may also help make effective use of Section 5310 Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities funds.

National Center for Mobility Management

The National Center for Mobility Management (NCMM) is funded by the FTA and housed at the Community Transportation Association of America (CTAA). The NCMM operates as a national technical assistance center and provides grant opportunities to support partnerships. The entity has provided multiple community planning grants to further the goals of the Transit and Health Access Initiative.

The following table, organized by goals for the Mat-Su Borough's coordinated plan, highlight some proposed funding streams that could be utilized for strategy implementation. This list is by no means comprehensive and is subject to change through funding allocations. Additionally, the list should not be limited to the sources suggested. Other funding opportunities may be available, such as emergency planning and preparedness, and transportation funding for special populations, such as Veterans and Tribal Transit Programming.

Figure 6-2 Proposed Funding Streams

	<p>GOAL 1 Develop a Comprehensive Plan for Communication, Education, and Awareness throughout the Borough</p>
	<p>Potential Funding Sources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In-kind agency assistance • 5310 funding • NCMM Grants
	<p>GOAL 2 Strengthen and Sustain Financial Opportunities</p>
	<p>Potential Funding Sources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5310 funding • In-kind agency assistance • 5303/5304 planning assistance
	<p>GOAL 3 Establish a Data Collection and Management Plan to Inform Future Planning Efforts</p>
	<p>Potential Funding Sources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5310 funding • 5311 funding • In-kind agency assistance • NADTC planning assistance
	<p>GOAL 4 Define and Address Regional Transportation Needs</p>
	<p>Potential Funding Sources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5303 funding • 5310 funding • NADTC planning assistance • NCMM community grants
	<p>GOAL 5 Support Ongoing Coordination, Collaboration, while Creating New Partnerships for Coordination</p>
	<p>Potential Funding Sources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5307 funding • NADTC planning assistance • NCMM community grants
	<p>GOAL 6 Design Safe, Accessible, and Affordable Services for Borough Residents</p>
	<p>Potential Funding Sources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NADTC planning assistance • 5310 funding • Emergency management funding (ARPA, etc.) • 5303 funding



Chapter 7.

Looking Ahead/Conclusions

This chapter looks ahead to key considerations that will likely have an impact on this Coordinated Plan in the future, and public engagement planning for the Borough.

Chapter 7 focuses on future considerations:

- Annual Reporting on the Coordinated Plan: How can the advisory committee and the Mat-Su Borough provide regular updates on Coordinated Plan progress?
- Lead Agency(ies) for Implementation: Who will report on strategy progress? How will this information be communicated?
- U.S. Census Updates: Urbanized area census determinations came out in December 2022. The U.S. Census Bureau determined that, due to rapid growth around the cities of Palmer and Wasilla, the area should be designated as urbanized.
- Transit Development Planning: While future transit planning is captured in the strategy section, it goes without saying that a detailed transit plan for the Borough is long overdue. The high percentages of marginalized populations compared to regional peers puts a fine point on the need for more local transit investment and planning.
- Linking all mobility options in the Borough: The Mat-Su Borough is currently working on the development of a bicycle-pedestrian plan. Linking this plan with future transit planning is critical for Borough residents, particularly those who need better access to stops and transfer centers.
- Engagement Planning: As the Borough continues to grow and the stakeholders begin implementing elements of the Coordinated Plan, engagement planning should be a consideration. This Chapter includes an engagement plan to get things started.



Annual Reporting on the Coordinated Plan: State of Coordination in the Mat-Su Borough

Provide regular Coordinated Plan updates to stakeholders.

Regular progress updates on the Coordinated Plan are important for stakeholders, such as boards of directors, city councils, Borough assembly, and health and human services leadership.

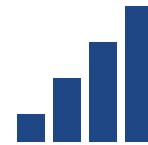


These updates should occur on an annual basis and provide a sort of “state of coordination” report for the Borough. The update can present dashboards showing initial baseline performance metrics for the priority strategies for year one; followed by performance metric reporting each year that follows. This will help keep stakeholders apprised and build rapport and trust, leading to greater future investments.

Lead Agencies for Implementation

Lead and support organizations will be responsible for measuring performance.

The project advisory committee met in two subsequent meetings in November and December of 2022 to discuss final strategy development and proposed lead organizations for each strategy.

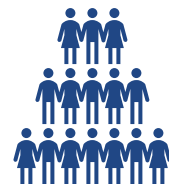


The project team worked with the committee to create an online matrix for keeping track of the proposed lead and support organizations that would help with strategy implementation. The matrix is a live, working document, so it is not included as a part of this report. Committee members, in conjunction with the Borough, will continue to have access to the matrix as they establish implementation working groups.

During implementation, lead and support organizations can utilize performance measures to establish a baseline. The baseline may be as simple as a “yes, this item was completed” or “no, the item was not completed” or may be a number or percentage associated with the strategy itself. At this time, the lead and support agencies will be responsible for measuring performance, with Mat-Su Borough oversight for final reporting purposes.

Pending Updates from the U.S. Census Bureau

The Mat-Su Borough has a population of more than 108,000, and the population of Wasilla is over 10,000 residents. Wasilla is the largest city in the Borough. Palmer’s population is over 7,000 residents and together, the cities make up part of the Anchorage Metropolitan Statistical Area. The region has experienced significant growth over the last decade and the U.S. Census Bureau has determined (as of December 2022) that the rapid growth of the



Borough has pushed areas in the region into an ‘urbanized’ designation from a ‘rural’ one, which will impact funding for public transit. As such, the Borough is currently undertaking the process to develop a stand-alone Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the area, which will help further coordination and planning efforts.

Transit Development Planning

As evidenced in Chapter 3, there have been multiple plans developed for the Mat-Su Valley and surrounding areas over the last decade. However, none of these plans is specific to transit planning and development. The region needs a plan that addresses specific, realistic transit planning needs, as well as a market analysis, and transit implementation scenarios coupled with costs. The Mat-Su Borough is currently in the process of putting together funding for such a plan, and the need is certainly greater with rapid regional growth and the potential for census changes on the horizon.



Linking Borough-Wide Mobility Options

According to the Borough website, the purpose of the MSB Bike and Pedestrian Plan (BPP) is to develop a detailed and prioritized list of bike and pedestrian infrastructure throughout the MSB that, when built, will increase safety and connectivity while promoting a healthier and more active lifestyle for Borough residents. The BPP will identify connectors between urbanized areas, recreation areas, and the backcountry so that MSB residents can safely and efficiently enjoy all that the region has to offer. In addition to these advantages, bike and pedestrian routes can effectively connect individuals to transit stops and centers, particularly ensuring accessibility and safety. The goals of the BPP are as follows:



The goals of the BPP are:

- Inventory and document the bike and pedestrian network to identify gaps and deficiencies
- Review MSB Code, the MSB Subdivision Construction Manual, and MSB policy to identify potential changes that will help implement the plan’s recommendations
- Create a prioritized list of projects to start building out the bike and pedestrian network
- Educate the public on the vision and goals of the BPP
- Solicit public input on the plan’s gap analysis and other finding
- Identify funding mechanisms to help implement the plan’s recommendations.

As the plan is rolled out, it is important to ensure linkages between the BPP and the any future transit plans.

Engagement Planning

Part of this coordinated plan is to take a closer look at engagement planning efforts, both for implementation of recommendations and for future transit plans. The following engagement plan supports these planning and implementation efforts.



Public and Stakeholder Engagement Considerations

Overall Project Summary and Talking Points

The Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan Update—or “Coordinated Plan”—aims to make transportation more seamless for older adults, individuals with disabilities, and other people facing mobility challenges in the Matanuska-Susitna Borough (the Borough).



Coordinated plans aim to improve transportation services for older adults, people with disabilities, and other marginalized populations. They are more formally known as coordinated public transit-human service transportation plans, and have a specific legal context at the federal, state, and regional levels.

The primary focus of this Coordinated Plan is to improve transportation and access for the following populations, who tend to experience more mobility challenges. These populations were identified by the lead agency to be included in this plan:

- Older adults
- Individuals with disabilities
- Tribal nations
- Youth (under age 18)
- Veterans
- Low-income individuals and families
- Unhoused populations
- Households with no vehicles

Community Engagement Objectives

- Establish a Coordinating Committee to guide plan implementation and provide oversight throughout the implementation process. The Coordinating Committee will be comprised of the project advisory committee, and will be responsible for internal coordination, planning and detailed guidance throughout the plan process, with monthly or quarterly check-in meetings.
- Participate in relevant ADOT&PF, Mat-Su Borough, and other relevant stakeholder meetings as appropriate. This will include meetings of the future Metropolitan Planning Organization.
- Provide Legislative/Assembly Updates as appropriate to educate and inform.
- Develop a Project Landing Page to provide frequent updates, widely distribute information, and act as an informational project clearinghouse. The landing



page could be housed in the interim at the Mat-Su Borough until the MPO is launched.

- Conduct a survey to gauge local perceptions of need and actual regional transportation and mobility needs.
- Hold Public Comment Periods and Hearing(s) to ensure public feedback into implementation planning.
- Host Regional Meetings throughout the region as appropriate.
- Conduct transit provider assessments to determine service availability and future service needs.

Target Audiences

- Community members
- Transit/Transportation service consumers
- Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities
- Statewide (legislature), City, and assembly elected officials
- 5307, 5310, 5311, and 5311c recipients
- Mat-Su Borough
- Health and Human Services
- Commerce & Economic Development Organization(s)
- Social Service(s), including Workforce Development
- Tourism and Recreation Divisions
- Advocacy groups/organizations



Primary Message

The Mat-Su Borough Coordinated Human Service Transportation Plan is the update to the 2018 Coordinated Plan for the Borough. The plan is being developed with the Mat-Su Borough as the lead agency and with the participation of multiple stakeholder agencies. The purpose of the plan is to:

- Improve transportation services for older adults, people with disabilities, and other marginalized populations.
- Aid in the allocation of future funding for transit projects for these marginalized populations.
- Identify and prioritize strategies for future implementation in the Borough.

Coordinating Committee

There are 21 stakeholder agencies represented on the coordinated plan's Advisory Committee, listed below. Most agencies have more than one representative to ensure regular attendance at meetings throughout the course of the plan and to help support stakeholder education and participation. These entities will be represented on the future Coordinating Committee for the Mat-Su Borough.



- Mat-Su Borough
- Mat-Su Health Foundation
- Chickaloon Area Transit Service
- Valley Transit
- Mat-Su Senior Services
- Sunshine Transit
- People Mover
- Knik Tribe
- Mat-Su School District
- Alaska DOT&PF
- AMATS (Anchorage MPO)
- My House
- Mat-Su Housing
- Identity, Inc. (LGBTQIA+ Advocacy)
- Emergency Management Services
- Sunshine Clinic
- Eklutna Tribe
- Valley Charities
- Links Resource Center
- Mat-Su Regional Health Center
- Benteh Nuutah (Tribal Medical Facilities)

Engagement Tactics and Toolkit

Key Engagement Strategies

Successful engagement requires tailored approaches to meet the assorted needs and priorities of key audiences and partners. Individuals and organizations within the key audience groups will vary in their understanding of coordinated planning and transit modes. To that end, it is recommended that the Borough use several core engagement strategies to connect with audiences around their priorities and concerns.



Community Meetings

Community meetings, forums, or public meetings are a method of collecting feedback from community members and neighborhood residents in an informal format. Typically, attendees are self-selected, having received an invitation, or notice for the meeting in advance. The agency soliciting input will usually provide posters, handouts, and other information in addition to a presentation regarding the information or proposed change the agency is seeking feedback on. Discussions in community meetings are highly interactive, wherein attendees can speak to one or more staff representatives from the agency holding the meeting.



Focus Groups / Affinity Groups

Focus groups are smaller in number (usually between 3-15 people; typically, 8) that are convened with a moderator or facilitator to discuss a specific topic. Focus groups are usually highly scientific, and participants are usually compensated for their time. The discussions from the focus group are clearly documented through notes or responses to specific questions. The discussions may be used to reflect ideas and opinions of the larger general population. This type of engagement is most often used in market studies with new consumer products.



Like focus groups, affinity groups pair like-minded, or individuals of a similar background together in an intense, small group setting for feedback purposes. For example, an agency may group developers together in one group, neighborhood associations together in another group, and city representatives together in a third group. Affinity groups are particularly helpful if the subject matter is high-conflict, or if the team simply wants to get direct feedback from specific groups of representatives before convening the discussion on a larger scale with a full audience.

Public Hearings

A public hearing is an official meeting, usually held at agency offices, such as a transit agency board room or city hall, where individuals from the public have up to three minutes each to speak on specific items which are being “heard” before the council or board. In lieu of speaking, citizens may also vote for or against a proposed change or may simply leave a comment for the council to review. All the meetings are documented, and public hearings are typically one of the last engagement steps in a planning process.



Surveys

Surveys are an incredibly useful tool for garnering public and stakeholder feedback. Surveys may be conducted in person or online, and the parameters may be infinite. Shorter surveys can be offered as the public attends various meetings, and can be delivered via paper, or electronically, with “clickers” that allow meeting attendees to vote on various ideas and concepts. Surveys can also be offered through the mail, at transit stops, and on agency websites. They are an ideal tool due to their flexibility. Survey designers need to ensure that questions are clear and concise, written in such a way to garner responses that are easy to understand.



Virtual and Remote Engagement

During the time of COVID-19, virtual and remote engagement will be the primary means of engaging the broader community. Below are the study’s main talking points for both virtual and remote engagement to reach key audiences and partners.



Tribal Engagement

There are multiple benefits to engaging tribal nations when in the planning processes for transit projects. Tribal engagement is particularly important to coordinated planning efforts, as tribal nations are considered one of the target populations for whom the plan is being implemented. The National Rural Transit Assistance Program (RTAP) outlined several important considerations for tribal engagement, including the following:



- **Access.** Information sharing regarding current transit services helps individuals access transportation services to health care, employment, educational opportunities, and other needs.
- **Equity.** Engaging tribal nations can help improve transportation equity and social justice within the current system.

- **Collaboration.** Creates an opportunity for cross-jurisdictional coordination and engagement for a more collaborative system, with the possibility for shared future investments.
- **Cooperative Understanding.** Potential to administer the tribal portion of a rural transit system; experience better understanding tribal transit needs and funding with cooperative agreements.
- **Cross-cultural, historic, and political exchange** allows for relationship development and better intergovernmental communication.
- **Funding.** Possible increased access to grant funding by collaborating between tribal nations and rural systems.
- **Provides a firm foundation** for additional future intergovernmental partnerships to achieve implementation of plan recommendations.

In November, the Biden-Harris Administration announced new actions to support Indian Country and Native Communities ahead of the Administration's Second Tribal Nations Summit. Since becoming President, Biden has prioritized relationships with Tribal Nations, and has subsequently prioritized investments for Tribal Nations. President Biden advanced an economic agenda including funding for Tribal communities and Native people, including \$32 billion in the American Rescue Plan (ARP), \$13 billion in the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL), and \$700 million in the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA).



Appendix

Federal Funding Streams for Public Transportation

	Federal Program	Eligibility	Application
1)	<p>Accelerating Innovative Mobility (AIM) (Link)</p> <p>Program Goals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify, test, and prove out new approaches, technologies and service models Promote the most promising mobility innovations that can be implemented more broadly through FTA's capital programs Establish a national network of transit stakeholders that are incorporating innovative approaches and business models to improve mobility <p>The federal share of project costs under this program is limited to 80 percent. Proposers may seek a lower federal contribution. The applicant must provide the local share of the net project cost in cash, or in-kind, and must document in its application the source of the local match.</p>	<p>Eligible activities include all activities leading to the development and testing of innovative mobility, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planning and developing business models Obtaining equipment and service Acquiring or developing software and hardware interfaces to implement the project Operating or implementing the new service model Evaluating project results. 	<p>Application opportunities are posted in the form of a Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) (link to March 2020 NOFO)</p> <p>In 2020, 25 public transit projects were selected across 24 states and 1 territory to receive \$14 million in funding. Funding amounts ranged from \$40,000 to \$2.3 million.</p>
2)	<p>American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (link) (fact sheet)</p> <p>Includes \$30.5 billion in supplemental appropriations allocated to support the transit industry during the COVID-19 public health emergency.</p>	<p>Appropriations include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> \$26.6 billion allocated by statutory formulas to urbanized and rural areas and tribal governments. Eligible activities for urbanized areas include <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planning, engineering, design and evaluation of transit projects and other technical transportation-related studies Capital investments in bus and bus-related activities such as replacement, overhaul and rebuilding of buses, crime prevention and security equipment and construction of maintenance and passenger facilities 	<p>Applications are competitive and submitted online (2021 form link)</p> <p>FTA will send notification when funding is available for obligation through the Transit Award Management System (TrAMS).</p> <p>FTA most recently announced Notice of Funding Opportunity September 7, 2021 (link)</p>

	Federal Program	Eligibility	Application
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Capital investments in new and existing fixed guideway systems including rolling stock, overhaul and rebuilding of vehicles, track, signals, communications, and computer hardware and software. – Associated transit improvements and certain expenses associated with mobility management programs – Preventive maintenance and some Americans with Disabilities Act complementary paratransit service costs • \$2.2 billion to FTA grant recipients in communities that demonstrate additional pandemic-associated needs. 	
3)	<p>Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) Transportation Grants Program (formerly TIGER) (link) (press release) (fact sheet)</p> <p>Funds investments in transportation infrastructure, including transit. Overall, USDOT has awarded \$9.9 billion to more than 700 projects.</p>	<p>RAISE projects are rigorously reviewed and selected on merit based on statutory criteria of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safety • Environmental sustainability • Quality of life • Economic competitiveness and opportunity • State of good repair • Partnership and innovation 	<p>Current Notice of Funding Opportunity (link) for \$1.5 billion in total funding, representing a 50% increase in available funds compared to last year, when applicants requested \$10 in funding for every \$1 available.</p> <p>In 2021, 63 funded projects received funding amounts ranging between \$2 million and \$25 million (fact sheet)</p> <p>Deadline of April 14, 2022.</p> <p>Selections announced by August 12, 2022</p>
4)	<p>Capital Investment Grants (CIG) – 5309 (link)</p> <p>Discretionary grant program funds transit capital investments, including heavy rail, commuter rail, light rail, streetcars and bus rapid transit.</p> <p>Fiscal years 2022-26 each have \$3 billion in authorized funding subject to appropriation, with additional \$1.6 billion per year in advanced appropriations. (funding info link)</p>	<p>The Fixing America’s Surface Transportation Act (FAST) requires projects fall under 1 of 3 categories (detailed guidance link):</p> <p>New Starts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Total project cost is equal to or greater than \$300 million or total New Starts funding sought equals or exceeds \$100 million • New fixed guideway system (light rail, commuter rail etc.) • Extension to existing system • Fixed guideway BRT system <p>Small Starts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Total project cost is less than \$300 million and total Small Starts funding sought is less than \$100 million • New fixed guideway systems (light rail, commuter rail etc.) • Extension to existing system • Fixed guideway BRT system • Corridor-based BRT system <p>Core Capacity projects are substantial corridor-based investment in existing fixed guideway system, which must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be located in a corridor that is at or over capacity or will be in five years 	<p>Federal transit law requires transit agencies seeking CIG funding to complete a series of steps over several years</p> <p>New Starts and Core Capacity projects require completion of two phases in advance of receipt of a construction grant agreement – Project Development and Engineering.</p> <p>Small Starts projects require completion of one phase in advance of receipt of a construction grant agreement – Project Development.</p> <p>Projects must also be rated by FTA at various points in the process according to statutory criteria evaluating project justification and local financial commitment.</p>

	Federal Program	Eligibility	Application
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase capacity by 10% • "not include project elements designated to maintain a state of good repair" 	
5)	<p>Enhancing Mobility Innovation (link)</p> <p>Promotes technology projects that center the passenger experience and encourage people to get on board, such as integrated fare payment systems and user-friendly software for demand-response public transportation.</p> <p>The federal share of project costs under this program is limited to 80%.</p>	<p>Eligible projects fit under one of two topical areas:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop novel operational concepts and/or demonstrate innovations that improve mobility and enhance the rider experience, focused on innovative service delivery models, creative financing, novel partnerships, and integrated payment solutions, or other innovative solutions. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This includes all activities leading to uncovering the next iteration of promising technologies, practices and strategies that accelerate innovations in mobility for transit, including, but not limited to, technology scanning and feasibility analysis, stakeholder engagement and outreach, planning, acquiring essential equipment or services, project implementation, modeling forecast of climate and equity impacts of proposed novel concepts and evaluating project results. 2. Develops software to facilitate demand-response public transportation that dispatches transit vehicles through riders' mobile devices or other means. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eligible activities may include establishing user needs; defining system requirements; development, validation and verification of the software; modeling and simulation; and/or pilot implementation, with a software solution. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On November 12, 2021, FTA released a Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) to solicit project proposals for the Enhancing Mobility Innovation Competitive Funding Opportunity. The NOFO made available \$2 million in Fiscal Year 2021 funds. • Project proposals were due January 11, 2022
6)	<p>Grants for Buses and Bus Facilities Program (link)</p> <p>To assist in the financing of buses and bus facilities capital projects, including replacing, rehabilitating, purchasing or leasing buses or related equipment, and rehabilitating, purchasing, constructing or leasing bus-related facilities.</p>	<p>Eligible Activities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capital projects to replace, rehabilitate and purchase buses, vans, and related equipment, • Capital projects to construct bus-related facilities, including technological changes or innovations to modify low or no emission vehicles or facilities. 	<p>Competitive allocation provides funding for major improvements to bus transit systems that would not be achievable through formula allocations.</p> <p>Supplemental Form link</p> <p>FTA last announced a Notice of Funding Opportunity due November 19, 2021 (link)</p>
7)	<p>Innovative Coordinated Access and Mobility Grants (ICAM) (link)</p> <p>To improve access to public transportation by building partnerships among health, transportation and other service providers</p>	<p>Eligible Activities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Innovative projects for the transportation disadvantaged that will improve the coordination of transportation services and non-emergency medical transportation services. 	<p>In 2018, there were two funding opportunities under the initiative: the Innovative Coordinated Access and Mobility (ICAM) Pilot Program and Human Services Coordination Research (HSCR) grants.</p> <p>In 2021, only the ICAM funding is available. FTA last announced a Notice of Funding Opportunity due December 6, 2021 (link)</p>

	Federal Program	Eligibility	Application
8)	<p>Integrated Mobility Innovation (IMI) (link)</p> <p>Program goals are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhance transit industry preparedness for IMI • Assist the transit industry to develop the ability to integrate IMI practices with existing public transit service • Validate the technical and institutional feasibility of IMI business models, and document IMI best practices that may emerge from the demonstrations • Measure the impacts of IMI on travelers and transportation systems • Examine relevant public sector and Federal requirements, regulations, and policies that may support or hamper the public transit sector's adoption of IMI 	<p>Eligible Activities fall under three research focus areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mobility on Demand • Transit Automation • Mobility Payment Integration <p>Activities can include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning and developing business models • Obtaining equipment and service • Acquiring or developing software and hardware interfaces to implement the project • Operating the demonstration • Providing data to support performance measurement and evaluation 	<p>In 2020, \$20.3 million in funding was granted to 25 projects in 23 states (press release link)</p> <p>FTA last announced a Notice of Funding Opportunity due December 6, 2021 (link)</p>
9)	<p>Metropolitan & Statewide Planning and Non-Metropolitan Transportation Planning - 5303, 5304, 5305 (link)</p> <p>Provides funding and procedural requirements for multimodal transportation planning in metropolitan areas and states. Planning needs to be cooperative, continuous, and comprehensive, resulting in long-range plans and short-range programs reflecting transportation investment priorities.</p>	<p>Eligible planning activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the economic vitality of the metropolitan area, especially by enabling global competitiveness, productivity, and efficiency • Increase the safety of the transportation system for motorized and nonmotorized users • Increase the security of the transportation system for motorized and nonmotorized users • Increase the accessibility and mobility of people and for freight • Protect and enhance the environment, promote energy conservation, improve the quality of life, and promote consistency between transportation improvements and State and local planned growth and economic development patterns • Enhance the integration and connectivity of the transportation system, across and between modes, for people and freight • Promote efficient system management and operation • Emphasize the preservation of the existing transportation system 	<p>Funds are apportioned to states by a formula that includes each state's urbanized area population in proportion to the total urbanized area population for the nation, as well as other factors. States can receive no less than .5 percent of the amount apportioned. These funds, in turn, are sub-allocated by states to MPOs by a formula that considers each MPO's urbanized area population, their individual planning needs, and a minimum distribution.</p>
10)	<p>Public Transportation Innovation – 5312 (link)</p> <p>Provides funding to develop innovative products and services assisting transit agencies in better meeting the needs of their customers.</p>	<p>Eligible Activities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research • Development • Demonstration • Deployment projects 	<p>Funds may be allocated on a discretionary basis. No recent NOFAs available</p>

	Federal Program	Eligibility	Application
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluation of technology of national significance to public transportation 	
11)	<p>Real-Time Transit Infrastructure and Rolling Stock Condition Assessment Research and Demonstration Program</p> <p>Funds cooperative agreements to engage in demonstrations to assess and identify infrastructure deficiencies in public transportation rolling stock via innovative technologies to keep public transit assets in a state of good repair.</p> <p>Intended to help transit agencies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore advanced cutting-edge technologies that can provide real-time condition assessment of transit capital and facilities Allow a more effective way for transit agencies to assess, detect, monitor and track deficiencies and defects related to infrastructure and rolling stock Evaluate the cost-effectiveness and the practicality of proposed state-of-the art solutions 	<p>This program is a research demonstration program and not a capital procurement program. The project proposals must include a research/synthesis phase, a development phase, and a demonstration phase. All phases are critical to project selection.</p> <p>To ensure proposed demonstration projects address the needs of transit agencies, FTA requires that applicants identify partnerships with at least one transit agency. FTA will assess the strength of those partnerships as part of its evaluation of applications.</p>	<p>Funding availability depending on FTA's Research, Development, Demonstration and Deployment Program. No recent NOFAs available.</p>